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THE AUSTRALIAN PC ENTERTAINMENT MAGAZINE

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Australian Style**

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TESTED**

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Beavis & Butthead
X-COM 3
You Don't Know Jack: Movies
Realms of the Haunting



Gomanche 3

•Redneck Rampage
•Blood

WIN COPIES!

DEREK SMART

*Why the Battlecruiser
guy is so angry*



9 771326 564002

ISSUE 14 July 1997

WOMEN SEEKING:

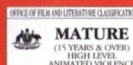
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bad ... sexy ... bitch
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meatpuppet

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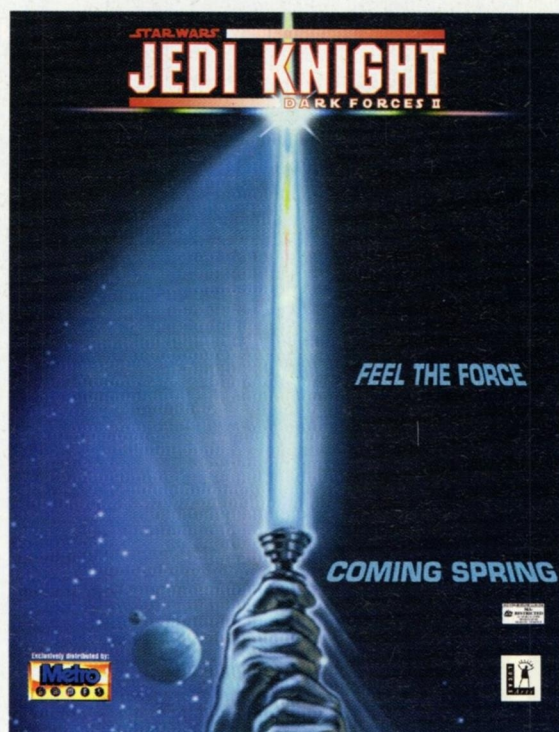
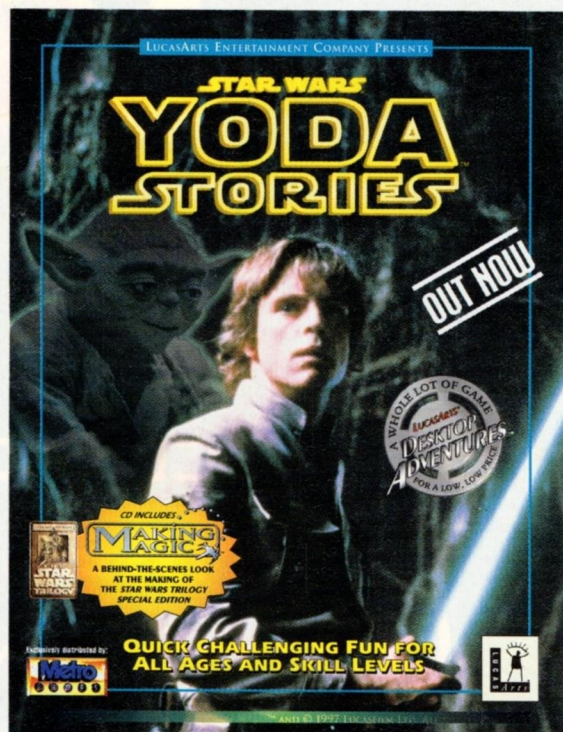
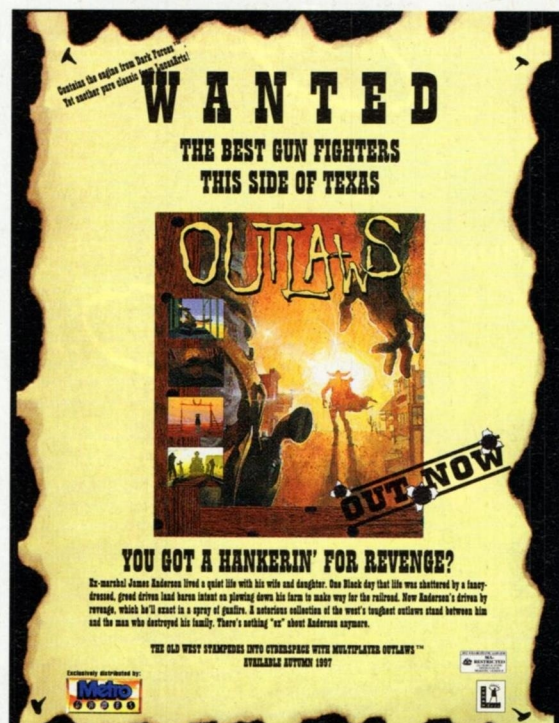
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1. UTILIZE UNSURPASSED TERRAIN ADVANTAGES



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Hide spider bikes in ravine

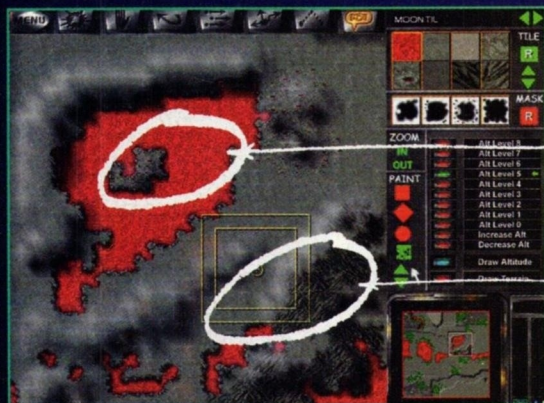
2. LAUNCH ADVANCED ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE



Harass enemy troops

Order units to retreat when hit

3. DEVELOP UNRIVALED MAPS AND MISSIONS



Add lava pit to bolster defensive front

Acquire enemy resources to end mission

DARK REIGN

THE FUTURE OF WAR

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THE RED

THE
STORMCLOUDS
ARE
GATHERING

THE

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WARCRAFT II? ANCIENT HISTORY!

■
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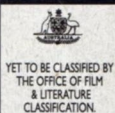
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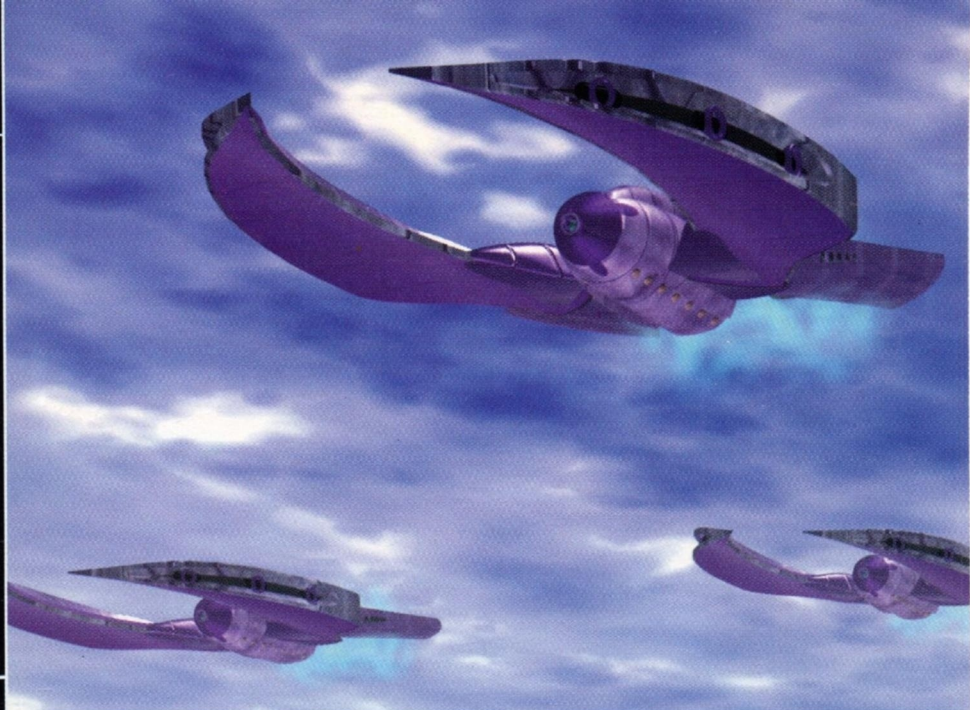
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What we're playing: MOO 2 (network), X-Wing vs. TIE,
Comanche 3, GLQuake, FIFA 97, Civnet, Dark Reign,
Deathmatch Quake, Suikoden.



Editorial



This is the time of year that gamers look forward to least. The couple of months leading up to E3 traditionally mean no major game releases, as the publishers hold all their good stuff back to (hopefully) blow away the competition at the mecca of gaming that is E3. No more. The PC games industry is now huge enough for these companies to have good games on the market now, as well as keeping the special stuff in reserve for the show. Savvy marketing types have also figured out that this quiet time is a great opportunity to get attention for their games that wouldn't ordinarily be forthcoming. Unfortunately for them, most marketing types worked this one out simultaneously... So, lots of games and good ones too.

Like Dark Reign. It's Australian, it's absolutely bloody fantastic and it's going to be huge. Or Redneck Rampage. Sure, Funny Doom isn't going to last on your hard drive as long as the proper stuff, but while it's there you'll love it. Some addictive and deep sci-fi strategy games came from nowhere too. Star Command, Imperium Galactica and Into The Void are here to save us from the fearful possibility of having only Master of Orion for another year.

Still, as rich as this month's games are, next month is E3 in Atlanta and the games and technology that will be revealed for the first time will be incredible. I'll be there, so make sure you don't miss next month's PC PowerPlay for the dirt on what you'll be playing/looking forward to for the next 12 months.

Oh, you may have heard something of Carmageddon lately. It's a racing game in a city environment. That means pedestrians, and being a computer game, you know what to expect when you run them down: red pixels. Unfortunately for Carmageddon, it came to the attention of the radio talkback blokes in the middle of "Road Rage week" which made it... a Road Rage Game. Oh dear... The end result is that we'll probably get the diluted version. Us and Germany. The rest of the world, operating under more realistic censorship guidelines, will be playing the normal version. Lucky us eh. Oh well, look on the bright side. Australia and Germany can watch in safety as the free world degenerates into anarchy, as gamers, their minds corrupted by this evil computer game, take to the streets for real and road rage civilisation itself to destruction. Don't laugh, it could happen, I heard some talkback guy say so...

Ben

The PC PowerPlay scoring system



90%+ A classic. Either an unquestionable example of superiority within its genre, or a ground breaking game that'll be setting trends.

80-90% A strong, eminently playable game. Hard to fault and likely to still be on the hard drive in 6 months time.

60-80% Competant and generally enjoyable. Flaws or mediocrity hold these games back from higher ratings.

40-60% Average and ordinary. Not bad, not good. Ideal gift

0-40% Bad, really bad. Boring, shamelessly unoriginal, cheap and horrible

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NEWS

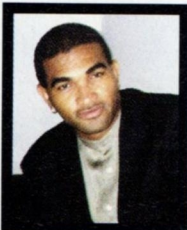
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Australia's biggest ever multiplayer deathmatch tournament, TEN and Multiplay sign a deal to bring you the best games online, does Intel's Pentium II bug affect gamers? Plus all the gaming news from the U.S. and U.K.

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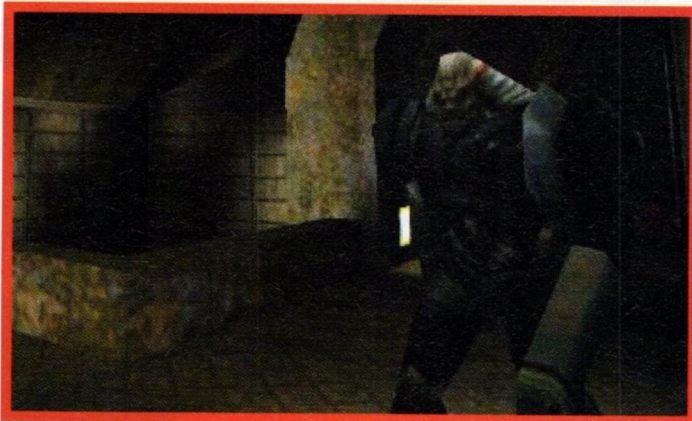
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- Comanche 3
- Redneck Rampage
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- Imperium Galactica
- Star Command
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- Into the Void
- 3D Mini Golf
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Not all modem's are created equal. Our major test and buyer's guide uncovers the best buys as well as the hardware to avoid.



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David Wildgoose lapses into a massive nostalgia overload.





CD GUIDE

The games people play. Now you can too.

CD Tech

Win 95

Running the Powerplay CD under Win 95 is best. All the games will appear on the menu and run, whether Win 95 or DOS.

CLICK ON THE POWERWIN ICON

DOS

Around half the games are DOS. The Powerplay DOS menu will only show DOS games

TYPE PCPOWER AT THE CD PROMPT (PROBABLY D:)

Win 3.1x

Some games will run under Win3.1x. The Powerplay menu won't work under Win3.1x, so run them straight from the CD with File Manager

RUN STRAIGHT FROM CD



Beavis and Butt-Head

It's 3 mini games in one, and you take the part of either Beavis or Butthead through their journeys, either hocking a loogie on passers-by, throwing tennis balls at tennis players, or catching junk food from an abandoned building. Simple, and eminently silly, but plenty of fun. Tee-pees for your buttohole not included.

System requirements 486/DX/33 minimum, 2X CD, 8MB RAM, Win 95, Mouse

This game is controlled with the mouse.

Cavewars

Ever had the desire to carefully plot the annihilation of other sentient species? Then cheer on with Avalon Hill's new strategy game that allows you to mercilessly crush up to four other players in an unusual underground environment. Offering an excellent strategic challenge, cavewars is like a big version of 3D chess with more killing and maiming!

System requirements : Pentium, 16Mb RAM, Soundcard. This application is controlled with the mouse.



Redneck Rampage

Redneck Rampage

DOS

A classic tale of alien livestock abduction!

Leonard and Bubba are two good-ol' boys from the backwoods of Arkansas who have a score to settle with some low-down, dirty space aliens. It seems these ornery extra-terrestrials made off with their prize pig, Bessie. Now they're fixin' to find out what happens when you separate a man from his sow. So ride shotgun with our two unlikely heroes as they go on the rampage, searching high and low for Bessie and stomping on anything that gets in their way!

Forward = UP ARROW

Backward = DOWN ARROW

Left = LEFT ARROW

Right = RIGHT ARROW

Strafe = L-ALT or R-ALT

Fire = L-CTRL or R-CTRL

Fire Shotgun (Both Barrels) = Hold Down L-CTRL or R-CTRL

Open = SPACE

Run = L-SHIFT or R-SHIFT

Haul-Ass = CAPSLOCK

Jump = A or /

Crouch = Z

Look Up = PGUP or KEYPAD 9

Look Down = PGDN or KEYPAD 3

Look Left = INS or KEYPAD 0

Look Right = DEL or KEYPAD .

Strafe Left = ,

Strafe Right = .

Aim Up = HOME or KEYPAD 7

Aim Down = END or KEYPAD 1

Center View = KEYPAD 5

Turn Around = BACKSPACE

Map = TAB

Map Follow Mode = F

Mouse Aiming = U

Crosshair = I

Increase/Decrease Screen = +/-

Drink Whisky = W

Drink Moonshine = M

Eat A Moonpie = O

Drink Some Beer = B

Inventory = [or]

1 = Crowbar

2 = .454 Pistol - great for long range shooting

3 = Shotgun - Hold the fire key down to shoot both barrels at once!

4 = Dynamite - Perfect for blowing things up

Blam Machinehead

DOS

BLAM! Machinehead from Core Design, is a 3D shoot-'em-up, not too dissimilar to Doom etc, whereby the player controls a character riding on a flying bomb! Equipped with a vast amount of



weaponry, the basic aim of the game is to progress to the end of a level, by destroying as many objects as possible. This game supports a Joystick/Gamepad/Mouse

Bustamove 2

DOS

Prepare yourself for one of the best puzzle games ever to be created. We're talking highly, highly addictive. Like all addictive games, the object is simple: fire balloons at groups of other balloons the same colour and make them fall until they're all eliminated. The demo actually lets you play through a fair amount of the the question is, will you be able to stop! **System requirements** : 486, 16Mb RAM, Soundcard. This application is controlled with the mouse.

Atomic Bomberman

DOS

The smash hit console game Bomberman is now ready to ahem, explode onto the PC. Exclaimed by many as the finest multiplayer game yet the PC version will allow up to 10-players simultaneously. Bomberman features deadly power-ups, in a race against the clock to blow your opponents to smithereens. Play it with your family! **System requirements** : Pentium, 16Mb RAM, Soundcard, Windows 95. This game supports a Joystick/gamepad/mouse.

Star Command

DOS

Star Command: Revolution is a real-time space strategy game where you explore space, gather resources, build units and then fight your way across the galaxy. You can play as one of four races. Make sure you do the tutorial! **System requirements** : 486, 16Mb RAM, Soundcard. This game is controlled with the mouse. **Space** = centers main view screen on currently selected unit **Enter** = centers main view screen on Mothership **Arrow Keys** = scroll main view screen **F1-F4** = load saved unit selections **F5** = toggle speed **L** = center on and select the last piece you built **H** = halt all selected units



CTRL+left click = destroy friendly station
SHIFT+left click = toggle add/subtract from group select
Alt+(Player Number) = your units will not harm that player/your healers will help them

Street Racer

DOS

Rev up and go ballistic with Street Racer, the action-packed animated cartoony road race that's an unashamed Mario kart clone but it's fun! Featuring fully 3-D animated landscapes. There's many different opponents with different personalities to contend with. **System requirements** : Pentium, 16Mb RAM, Soundcard. This game supports a Joystick/Gamepad.

Realms of the Haunting

DOS

Realms of the haunting isn't just a first person shooter with stunning graphics. It's actually an adventure too! Picking up the gun allows you to kill the evil inside the house, but remember to pick everything else up as well. You have to use the objects you find to reveal new areas of the house.

Up = Forward
Down = Backward
Left = Turn left
Right = turn right
< = Strafe left
> = Strafe right
Page Up = Look up
Page Down = Look up and down.
Home/End = Set viewing angle tilt.
CTRL = Fire weapon or punch if no weapon is selected.
CapsLock = Run Mode on/off.
A = Jump.
Z = Crouch.
H = Displays mouse/keyboard functions.
I = Brings up the Inventory Menu.

Destruction Derby 2

DOS

With Psygnosis' new commitment to the PC, more and more Sony Playstation games are being converted over. Destruction Derby 2 is the latest to reach the PC. With massive spills, damage, and deliberate destruction, you'll never need to road rage again. **System requirements** : Pentium, 16Mb RAM, Soundcard. This game supports a Joystick/Gamepad/Mouse.

Blue Ice

DOS

In the frozen landscape of Icia where there is no place for the joy of living and freedom anymore. You begin the journey that is to not save, but enlighten Edward LCCXII to the beauty of the

Flight Sim for Wings



world and teach him how to feel sensations. A compellingly different adventure that also contains puzzles that will challenge the strongest minds within a thoroughly artistic environment. **System requirements** : 486, 16Mb RAM, Win 95, Soundcard. This application is controlled with the mouse.

DeathDrome

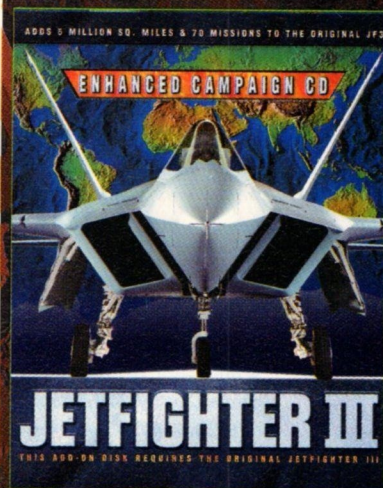
Win95

It's the near future, and hard core criminals are turned into sacrifices for the viewing population, did someone say "Running man"? Thrown into an arena on a tron like bike it's a duel to the death. Lot's of weapon powerups, explosions and multiple arenas to race around. Big fun. **System requirements** : Pentium, 16Mb RAM, Soundcard, Windows 95, Direct X. This game supports a Joystick/gamepad. **Controls**:
Up = forward
Down = Brake / reverse
Left = Turn left
Right = Turn Right
Look left = E
Look right = R
View behind = A
Fire = Alt
Toggle weapon = Shift
Jump = Space
Barrier = Control
Taunt = T

Flight Unlimited for Win 95

Win95

Flight Unlimited has always been the most visually impressive of the Flight Simulators. With plenty of global locations and things to do, the physics in this simulator are so complex, there's even thermal lift between mountains. This demo limits you to one plane, but enjoy the view. **System requirements** : Pentium, 16Mb RAM, Soundcard, Windows 95, Direct X. This game supports a Joystick/Gamepad.



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CD GUIDE continued...

Meat Puppet

Win95

In this micro-mission of Meat Puppet, Lotos (that's you) is trapped in the Eugenics Clinics. While there, her digital partner, Dumaine, discovers that the Clinics has lost a valuable piece of technology in the sewers that connect to the Clinics themselves. Obtain the missing technology to complete the mission. Along the way, collect flame thrower and nerve gas upgrades. Most creatures avoid the well-armed assassin.

System requirements : Pentium, 16Mb RAM, Soundcard, Windows 95, Direct X
This game supports a Joystick/Gamepad/Mouse

Jetfighter 3

DOS

Following on from the very successful Jetfighter 1 and 2, Jetfighter 3 has you in control of an F-18 or an F22 Lightning. Still as easy to play as the previous Jetfighter games, you're going to need some beefy hardware to turn all the graphical frilly bits on.

System requirements : Pentium, 16Mb RAM, Soundcard.
This game supports a Joystick/Gamepad.

NBA Jam Extreme for Windows 95

DOS Win95

Following on from the success of NBA Jam, NBA Jam Extreme utilises fully 3 Dimensional objects to represent the players. They look good to! Definitely faster than the Dos version, the Windows 95 version utilises Direct X, but without and 3D acceleration.

System requirements : Pentium, 16Mb RAM, Win 95, Soundcard.
This game supports Joystick/Gamepad control only.

Noir

DOS Win95

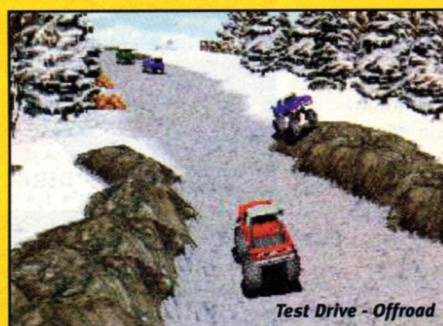
Sit back, dull the lights, freshen the air with stale cigarette smells and allow the full moon to dimly light your surroundings. Watch the rolling demo of Noir, and soak up all the ambience.

System requirements : Pentium, 16Mb RAM, Win 95, Soundcard.

Pandemonium

DOS Win95

Pandemonium looks to be a very hot title



Test Drive - Offroad

indeed. Sort of like Crash Bandicoot for the Sony playstation, it features fully 3 dimensional objects, yet you run around a series of platforms like the ol' days of gaming. A fantastic mix of modern 3D and platform nostalgia. 3Dfx owners, you're in for a big surprise, your card is fully supported and it looks FANTASTIC! (3Dfx screenshots only displayed).

System requirements : Pentium, 16Mb RAM, Win 95, Soundcard.

This game supports a Joystick/Gamepad
Once you start the game, you can alter certain parameters from the game menu by pressing the ESCAPE key. The options are:
Adjust sound and music volumes,
Change keyboard controls,
Change joystick button controls, or
Alter performance parameters (non-3Dfx only).

SimPark

DOS Win95

SimPark allows you to create and run your own nature parks. With over 130 plant and animal species to choose from, you have to manage the flora and fauna making sure each fit right within each ecosystem. Each species has unique features and you will find that attracting human visitors can really change the scenery.
System requirements : Pentium, 16Mb RAM, Win 95, Soundcard.

This application is controlled with the mouse.

Test Drive Off Road

DOS Win95

Remember the days of Test Drive when you could jump in the supercars of the time and go for a race up the winding roads of a mountain. Well in Test Drive Off Road, forget the windy roads and just scale the mountain! This demo only gives you one course and 4 vehicles, but with crisp clear graphics and the ability to roll over any terrain, it's like Monster truck madness in a suit and tie!

System requirements : Pentium, 16Mb RAM, Win 95, Soundcard.

This game supports a Joystick/Gamepad.
Control

Up = Forward
Down = Break/Reverse
Left = Turn Left
Right = Turn Right

Tigershark

DOS Win95

In Tiger Shark, you control a futuristic Hydrofoil/Sub that can glide across the ocean surface, or dive deep below. There's plenty of enemies to kill and you can even sneak up on boats and battleships from underneath and blast em.
System requirements : Pentium, 16Mb RAM, Win 95, Soundcard.

This game supports a Joystick /Gamepad /Mouse.

Additional support for : 3DFX, MMX.



X-Com 3

All available controls sets and their configuration options are shown on the Controls Tab of the Configuration Menu.

By clicking on the control mapping buttons, you can remap any of the controls to any button (keyboard, mouse, joystick). Where applicable you can choose any valid joystick or mouse axis.

Virtual Pool 95

DOS Win95

If you're really bad at pool don't shy away from this fine product. Perfectly representing the game of pool in every way it offers an amazing simulation experience. It's so accurate you'll even get better at the real thing. Hey, if you're already good at it, get on the Net and take on some people with the Multiplayer support.

System requirements : Pentium, 16Mb RAM, Win 95, Soundcard.

This application is controlled with the mouse. Additional Keyboard commands.

S = Stroke cue (Take Shot)
E = Move cue tip
R = Replay
T = Cheat
U = Undo
O = Above view
A = Aim
X = Quick Above view
C = Centre view
V = Move view
B = Raise Butt

X-Com 3 - Apocalypse

DOS

If you liked Xcom 1, and Xcom 2 (Heck, even if you didn't like them), then Xcom 3 is a god send. Featuring Improved turn-based combat with new abilities for all the characters. They can now run, crawl and kneel in fluid animated motions. Properly equipped, agents can now also jump across small gaps and climb up walls and ladders. New options also include gravity in the combat engine. X-COM agents can shoot at pipes on the ceiling, for example, and watch them come crashing to the ground on top of an unsuspecting alien. Grenades and other high explosive devices will now have much more strategic value to your arsenal. Of course, you need to be careful about the damage you cause to a building, because the owning corporation will cut off your funds if you destroy their factory! But the one missing feature has finally been addressed, to keep EVERYONE happy, there is

now an optional real-time combat mode: Before each tactical combat mission, you have the choice of fighting the aliens in the turn-based mode or the new real-time mode. The real-time mode gives you total control over the pace of the action, you can pause the action at any time and reassign your agents, give them new commands, load different weapons and assess the strategic situation. What are you waiting for, start playing now!!

System requirements: Pentium, 16Mb RAM, Soundcard.
This application is controlled with the mouse.

KEYBOARD CONTROLS
General

Switch Map View = TAB
Up Level Arrow = PAGE UP
Down Level Arrow = PAGE DOWN
Toggle Map Level Display = Print Screen
Set Safe Mode = F9
Set Cautious Mode = F10
Set Aggressive Mode = F11
Crawling = F2
Walking = F3
Running = F4
Don't Fire = F5
Aimed-Shot = F6
Snap-Shot = F7
Auto-Shot = F8
Kneel = BACKSPACE
Message History = M
Center-On Message = HOME
Select Squad = 1,2,3,4,5,6
Assign selected units to squad = CTRL + 1,2,3,4,5,6
Abort mission = ESCAPE
'Hand' Area
Equip Unit Screen = ENTER
Throw (Left Hand) = [
Throw (Right Hand) =]
Drop (Left Hand) = @
Drop (Right Hand) = #
Real-Time Only
Pause on/off = SPACE
Turn-Based Only
End Turn = E

You Don't Know Jack Movies

DOS Win95

The You Don't Know Jack series of trivia games are the best ever made, by a long stretch. Now, You Don't Know Jack Movies offers the same presenter, better jokes, more random phone calls and questions only about Movies. The You Don't Know Jack series are the ultimate party games. Try it and see what we mean!
System requirements: Pentium, 16Mb RAM, Win 95, Soundcard. This application is controlled with the mouse.

UTILITIES

Digital Underground (DUG) -

Multipayer games can be great fun, but the Internet can also be very slow which rather ruins the experience. The solution however is to use a dedicated dial-up server, like DUG. Setup the browser, click on the connect icon, and you're away. Play Quake, Interstate 76, Monster Truck Madness, Red Alert, C&C, and plenty more.

DUGIPX - A demo of Kahn to play IPX network games (eg. Warcraft II, Red Alert & Duke3d) on Digital Underground.

Engage - Another company offering multipayer services across the Net.

LView Pro - LView Pro is an image file editor for Microsoft Windows 95, Windows NT 3.51 or newer and Windows 3.1* with Win32s 1.30 or newer. It loads/saves image files in: JPEG, JFIF, GIF 87a/89a, TIFF, Truevision Targa, Windows and OS/2 BMP, ZSoft's PCX, and PBMPLUS' PBM, PGM and PPM formats.

McAfee Virus Scanner - Downloading cool utilities and demos is a necessary thing to do, but there's always the danger of having a nasty little virus tag along for the ride. A virus scanner like McAfee will cleanse your system on a regular basis. If you haven't got a virus scanner yet, Give this a go, it's one of the best. Works in Dos/Win 3.11 and Win 95.

Palace - The Palace is a collection of on-line communities where you can share common interests with others. In PalaceSpace, you participate as an avatar - a graphical representation of yourself. Chat, attend live events, join multipayer games, shop for merchandise, and more - all within a rich multimedia environment!

Pkzip - The compression utility that has been around since the dawn of time, so to speak. This is the latest version for both Windows 3.1 and 95.

Paint Shop Pro - Paint Shop Pro v4.1 is the complete windows graphics program for image creation, viewing, and manipulation. Features include painting with 8 brushes, photo retouching, image enhancement and editing, colour enhancement, image browser, batch conversion, and scanner support. Included are 20 standard filters and 12 deformations. Supports plug-in filters. Over 34 file formats. Win95 or NT 4

DOS TROUBLESHOOTING

The most likely cause of any problem is a shortage of conventional memory. This has nothing to do with how much RAM is on your system, but how it's set up. To find out how much is available for the games, type MEM /CIMORE. Look for a line that reads LARGEST EXECUTABLE PROGRAM SIZE, if it's over 550k then everything should run. If it's under that figure, you'll need to edit your system files to sort it out.

The easiest way is to use the MAKE BOOT DISK facility found on most game installation menus. If you'd prefer not to do that, then you'll need to manually edit your two configuration files - the CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT.

To do so, type EDIT CONFIG.SYS and EDIT AUTOEXEC.BAT. In the CONFIG.SYS file, the most likely culprit is EMM386.EXE. You don't need it for the majority of games, so put REM at the start of the line. This will disable it. In the AUTOEXEC.BAT look to see if you are running SMARTDRV, if it's there, put REM at the start. These two simple measures should overcome most problems. If you're still running short on conventional memory (the game should give you an error message telling you how much more you need), then a boot disk is the best solution.

THE PC POWERPLAY CD - The games on the CD are designed to be run in different ways. Some can be run straight from the disc, while others need to be installed. Games requiring installation will usually prompt you with a choice of where it will install to, so take note! Many of the games which run from the CD will only produce sound effects if you have a Sound Blaster compatible sound card set to default settings. That's 99% of you, so if you get no sound you're best copying the game to your hard drive, then running the setup program - usually INSTALL, SETUP, CONFIG or SOUNSET. As with all problems PC, trial and error is the only true solution. Feel free to copy an entire game to your hard drive. All games are in the GAMES directory. Also copy a game from the CD if it mysteriously refuses to install. Then run the INSTALL file from the hard drive.

DISCLAIMER - All possible care is taken while selecting, testing and installing the software which is included on the PC PowerPlay CD. Next Publishing accepts no responsibility for data loss or other damage which may occur during its use. If your CD is clearly faulty, send it in for free replacement to:

PC PowerPlay - CD Returns,
PO BOX 634, Strawberry Hills
NSW 2012

SUPPORT - cdtech@pcpowerplay.next.com.au

Winner SIA & ZiffNet awards. From JASC, Inc. Quicktime for Windows
Video for Windows - The runtime version of Video for Windows to allow AVI usage on your PC.

Patches

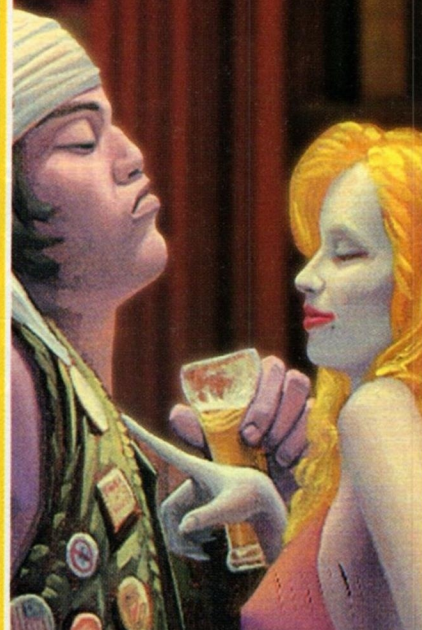
3rd Reich, Age of Rifles, Apache, Broken Alliance, Civilisation 2, Destruction Derby 2, Descent 2, Discworld 2, Duke Nukem 3D, Flying Corps, Jet Fighter 3, Microsoft Flight Simulator for Win 95, Mech Warrior 2 Mercenaries, Privateer 2, Skynet, Strife, Terminator Future Shock, Tigers on the prowl 2, Tomb Raider for Rendition 3Dfx and Matrox Mystique, Warcraft 2 Tides of Darkness

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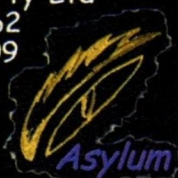
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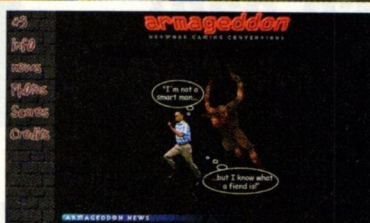


Late this month, on Sunday the 27th of July, the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition centre is going to become a mecca for Australian gamers.

Armageddon #3 will be rolling into town. It's something worth getting excited about, as A3 will be the largest gaming event Australia has ever seen, and one of the largest anywhere in the world to boot - with sneak previews of games from some of Australia's best software developers, Quake tourneys, and the opportunity to meet and

chat with the people behind the games, like the guys from the Dark Reign team as well as a host of others.

The organisers are expecting around 200 PCs networked together for the games fest, with 15 top of the line public servers equipped with all the best multiplayer games, and 15 dedicated Quake servers as well. They're expecting around 1000 gamers to turn up, and around 20 of Australia's top Quake clans. There will be plenty to keep them happy, with two



Quake tourneys to be run on the day, one for single players and one for clans, all fighting for the title of Australia's best Quaker (and Quake Clan).

For more information and tickets you can call in at any Queensland 'Software Today' store, or check out the A3 web page at www.armageddon.thehub.com.au

TEN coming to Australia with Multiplay

Multiplay, one of Australia's largest dedicated multiplayer gaming networks, have just entered into an exclusive affiliation agreement with the San-Francisco based Total Entertainment Network (TEN). Good news. TEN is one of the largest gaming services in the states, and has exclusive deals for plenty of top of the line games - games that will now be available through Multiplay for Australian multiplayer gamers.

Multiplay also host the official Battle.net server for Australia, as well as the official QuakeWorld master

server - which allows for up to 32 player Quake games, much improved TCP/IP multiplayer games, and a world wide ranking system for players. For a company that started early last year primarily as a way to multiplay Quake on a fast network Multiplay have come a long way in a short time. They've expanded to three major centres, and now offer a range of games as well as a KALI server for just about every IPX compatible game you can think of. There are no plans at present to change their pricing structure either, so the \$29.95 per month fee for unlimited gaming time looks like it's going to stay, at least for a while.



Multiplay currently have dial-up services available from Sydney, Canberra and Wollongong, though they plan to expand POP's to Melbourne and Brisbane in the third quarter. Multiplay can be contacted at www.multiplay.com.au or on 1800 359 200.

sidelines

Seen any UFO's lately? If you have, and you managed to get a picture of it, don't rush off and sell it to the National Enquirer just yet. MicroProse have started a competition to promote the launch of 'X-Com: Apocalypse'. They want pictures or some sort of 'proof' of your encounter along with a detailed description, and the best one will win a trip to E3 in Atlanta. It's all just a big conspiracy though, to mask the truth that MicroProse execs don't want you to know - each copy of X-Com has a small device implanted that will send information back about your personal habits. Trust no-one.

It's been almost ten years since the original Sim City, but Maxis are still pumping sequels out. Sim City 3000 is slated for release by mid to late 1997, and will feature detailed 3D graphics, allowing SimMayors to view their cities from street level up to 50,000 feet in the air. There's a host of other new features as well, such as the player receiving face to face feedback from their citizens. Maxis are going to preview their new sim at E3, so you can expect more details to follow shortly.

Plans are already underway for add on disks for X-Wing vs. Tie Fighter to be ready by the end of the year. The disk will address some of the issues that players have commented upon in newsgroups, and it looks as though the single player missions are going to get some attention. Support for some 3D accelerator cards looks to be on the horizon too, with patches expected within a couple of months, but there's no word on exactly which cards will get support as yet.

Shameless sister-mag plug: If you're into rock n' roll, check out the August edition of Rolling Stone which offers a free bonus book. Sponsored by MTV, the Rock 'n Roll Adventures Book features heaps of great stuff on Alanis Morissette, Kurt Cobain & Courtney, Pearl Jam, Bjork, U2, Smashing Pumpkins, Tori Amos and tonnes more.

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sidelines

It might look like a bit of a dodgy idea, but Scott Miller, president of Apogee/3D Realms, thinks there might be some money in it. He's signed an agreement with Pocket Books to publish four books based on two of their titles; Duke Nukem and Shadow Warrior. The plan is for two books from each game but they won't just be rehashes of the events from the games themselves, instead you can expect continuations of the events and characters as with the oh-so-readable Doom books that proved to be so popular. Expect the Shadow Warrior books first, followed by the Duke titles around the same time as Duke Nukem Forever is released.

We told you about the war of words between Hipnotic Interactive and 3D Realms last issue - well, it's still going, and it's starting to get very nasty too. Michael Hadwin from Hipnotic has released a nasty little 'story' of the situation, insinuating that 3D Realms were just copycats, didn't have an original idea, couldn't build their own game engine so they were forced to license the Quake II technology, and the staff that left 3D Realms for Hipnotic might even have been spies for Hipnotic in the first place. Scott Miller from 3D Realms was quick to respond, and took the high moral ground, castigating Hadwin for his 'immaturity', and noting that Hipnotic's Quake Mission Pack had a room with three headstones inscribed with the initials of the top three 3D Realms employees. Play nice now, boys.

More on the Quake killer/clone genre - Epic MegaGames' much anticipated forthcoming title, Unreal will only support either OpenGL or Direct3D, rather than both according to Tim Sweeney, Unreal's lead programmer. He's also singing the virtues of the 3Dfx card, for those in the market for a 3D accelerator, and stated that Unreal will run very well with the 3Dfx, as well as a host of other games. Unreal will also support a number of CPU's, including Pentiums, P Pro's, MMX pentiums, the AMD K6, Cyrix CPU's as well as Pentium II processors.

Still with Quake related games, Activision and Hipnotic Interactive have announced the title of their upcoming game, the sixth to make use of the Quake engine. It's going to be called 'Sin!', and Hipnotic have some sketches available for viewing on their website at www.hipnotic.com

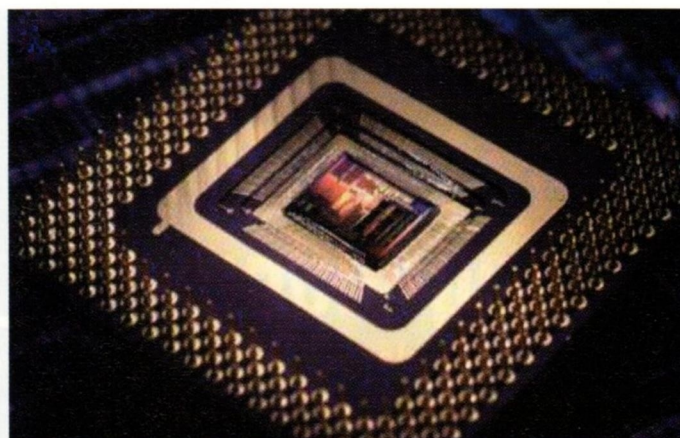
ATI have made a bit of a name for themselves in the past with regard to their consumer policy. They entered into the 3D accelerator board market with their ATI Rage card, and then a couple of months later released a new and improved model, completely superceding the previous one, which needless to say didn't make those who purchased the original very happy at all. Now ATI have just released their latest 3D/2D card onto the market, the XPERT@Play. The board does look like a good combination of 3D and 2D graphical capabilities, as well as DVD video acceleration and the ability to use a TV for display. Whether consumers are going to forgive and forget is another matter entirely though...

Pentium Pro & Pentium II Bug - not so bad!

On may the 5th a message was posted at www.x86.org/secrets/Dano411.html regarding a bug found in the Pentium Pro and the Pentium II processors. This bug was discovered to be in the floating-point unit of the CPU.

Intel has confirmed the presence of a bug which occurs when executing a FIST instruction, this instruction is used for converting floating-point (decimal place numbers) data to Integer (whole numbers) data. It happens when a very large negative number is converted to an Integer and goes past the biggest negative value the register can handle, this value has to be greater than -98,304 to cause the error. The bug only occurs with the i6 and 32bit versions of the FIST instruction, the 64Bit version is unaffected. When an overflow occurs. The P6 sets the PE (Precision Exception) flag in the FPU (Floating Point Unit) status register instead of setting the IE (Invalid operation Exception) flag as previous processors like the 486 and the Pentium chips did. Programs that have been specifically designed to check the IE flag for overflows will not know of the error and may end up report meaningless data.

Intel is working extremely hard to ensure that all applications are checked for possible malfunction and is working with software vendors to check if any applications are affected, most programs have their own overflow checking, as most compilers don't have a standard way of supporting FPU exceptions. Operating systems such as Windows 95 and NT will just ignore floating-point exceptions when encountered. Intel has placed a work around on their web site, check out www.intel.com for information. Most games should be unaffected by this bug.



** NEWS FLASH ** IDT-C6 Processor announced.

Centaur Technology Inc. a spin off company of IDT (Integrated Device Technologies Inc.) is soon to try and take a piece of the x86 pie from Intel. Centaur's new x86 compatible processors (www.centtech.com) are nearly ready for release, which should be sometime in the early second half of 1997, the new processors, known as the IDT-C6, will come in speeds of 150, 180, and 200 MHz. The processor has around 5.4 million transistors and still manages to have a tiny 88 millimetres squared footprint, 50 percent smaller than most Pentium clones die sizes. The C6 is also equipped with the MMX instruction set and is also socket 7 compatible, so will work with current motherboards. These processors will be aimed at the low-cost desktop and mobile market, so expect very good pricing on all three variations of the chip.

G.W.

Top Ten Games

Rank	TITLE
Developer / Distributor	
This	Last Month
1	-
NEED FOR SPEED 2	
Electronic Arts / Electronic Arts	
2	-
X-WING VS. TIE FIGHTER	
LucasArts / Metro Games	
3	6
TOMB RAIDER	
Core Design / Eidos	
4	-
INTERSTATE '76	
Activision / Roadshow	
5	-
OUTLAWS	
LucasArts / Metro Games	
6	-
RED ALERT: Counterstrike	
Westwood / Sega Ozisoft	
7	2
DIABLO	
Blizzard / Dataflow	
8	8
C&C (ANNIVERSARY PACK)	
MicroProse / Sega Ozisoft	
9	-
GRAND PRIX 2	
Microprose / Seag Ozisoft	
10	-
FLIGHT SIMULATOR (Fly Aust.)	
Microsoft / Various	

Week ending 18th May 1997.

The Acer best selling charts are carefully compiled from a sample panel of retailers selected across Australia including mass merchants, department stores, specialty software stores and independent outlets. Retailers surveyed include Myer Grace Bros., David Jones and John Martins, K Mart, Target, Big W, World 4 Kids, Harvey Norman Computer Super Stores, Blockbuster, Brashes, Video Games Heaven, and Games Wizards.

Charts supplied by Australian Computer Entertainment Review

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Did Too! Did Not!

Mid-May saw a little tiff aired publicly between Enemy Nations game developer Windward Studios and publisher Head Games. In mid-May Windward Studios head Dave Thielen published a statement on their Web site that Head Games had failed to fork over some money owed them and thus was shutting down the Web site and endangering the competition of Enemy Nations. Well, a week later cooler heads prevailed and things been smoothed over by Head Games big cheese Dan Hammett. Hammett says Windward was promised that their marketing expenses would be reimbursed by Head Games, but Windward had not turn in any receipts, so no reimbursement has been made, but will be once the paperwork has been turned in. "They chose to delay sending me over the information," Hammett says, "working themselves into a frenzy, spreading rhetoric around the Internet, and then turning off their web site." Hammett also says that Windward is "the most difficult developer I've ever worked with." but that Head Games will support Enemy Nations and will work to make it a hit. Before that can happen Hammett says there are some serious bugs that Windward has to fix and press another gold master. Hammett says Head Games will pay royalties and fulfill their commitment. He says, "They just have to do their end."

In the meantime, Thielen has backed off his published statements (quote. "Due to Head Games continuing to delay payments due to Windward Studios, until further notice Windward Studios will provide no support of any kind. We apologize for this but we cannot continue to provide support, that in many cases is actually the responsibility of the publisher, if we are not going to be paid.") and removed the diatribe from the Web page. This skirmish seems to be settled, but only time will tell what will transpire in the coming weeks.

**WINDWARD
STUDIOS**

She Quaked Romero

Yes, Kornelia Takacs of Hungary and new to the U.S. beat out five other guys to meet Quake designer John Romero in a deathmatch held during the Computer Game Developer's Conference and fragged him good. Takacs ultimately beat Romero by 11 frags and took home the grand prize of a super-loaded MMX Pentium computer. Who says computer games are dominated by males?



U2 Lara Croft?

Despite handing television network ABC some of the lowest ratings it had ever received during a recent U2 special, spin doctors are still hyping the Irish band's latest tour as the most expensive ever. And for gamers who are also into music (is there time for both?) they will be treated to a special video venture of Tomb Raider's heroine Lara Croft. Yes, game designers Core with the permission of publisher Eidos, put together a special video that will be shown on U2's 7,000 square foot video screen during the PopMart tour. PopMart kicked off in Las Vegas April 25th and will cost a reported \$120 million USD. Money moves in mysterious ways.



Some Hardware bites the dust.



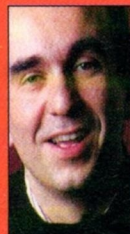
Did you know anyone who owned a 3DO machine? Me neither. But that console machine that was to have rivalled Nintendo and the PC is all but dead. 3DO's Trip Hawkins says he had sold the last remnants of his hardware business to Samsung for \$20 million USD. Trip Hawkins, one of gamedom's pioneers (he

helped form Electronic Arts) will now have complete operating control of 3DO since 3DO president Hugh Martin will be moving on.

And here is a hardware death that will surely throw us all into a state of desperate woe. Bandai says that Pippin is dead. The Pippin was a television top multimedia console that you could play games with and access the Internet. Bandai says sales of the Pippin was "disappointing" and will no longer make them. Instead, Bandai says they will form a new unit from the Pippin ashes who will focus on designing PC and Mac based games. That includes a CD-ROM version of Tamagotchi, the virtual pet that is driving Japan virtually crazy. Coming this October Bandai will merge with Sega in an already done deal.

Bullfrog's Molyneux finds his legs

I should have seen it coming. Some while ago Peter Molyneux, the game designer extraordinaire of Syndicate and Magic Carpet, told me he was wanting to get a game of Internet Diplomacy going and invited me to join in. Well, we never did, but it could have been the first sign he was getting bored with Bullfrog. Now comes word that Dungeon Keeper is finished and that Molyneux has left Bullfrog and is in the process of forming a new company. It's also rumoured that Molyneux has joined up with his old parent company, Electronic Arts, who will publish his new game. Usually Molyneux attends E3 and maybe we can find out more then. Dungeon Keeper is slated for a mid-July release.



Poor Acclaim

Acclaim is still smarting from financial woes and has announced another round of layoffs. Some 115 employees will be hacked as part of the \$40 million USD cost cutting measures. These employees will be joined the 70 who have already been laid off. Acclaim lost \$17 million USD last quarter which is much less than the same quarter loss of \$55 million USD a year ago. And even with the mega-success of Turok: Dinosaur Hunter for the N64, it is not enough to pull Acclaim back into the black.

Sperry moves up.

Westwood, while not a big money maker, is a stable game publisher and now Westwood president Brett Sperry has been appointed to lead development at parent company Virgin Interactive Entertainment. VIE parent companies, Spelling Entertainment and Viacom, have listed VIE as a discontinued operation and have put up the unit for a fire sale price. Of course, under the heavy and nearly incompetent hand of Viacom, Virgin's future was foretellable. More than likely VIE will make a public offering in the \$300 million USD range sometime late this year. Sperry indicates he will make some hard decisions about the 40 titles now in development at VIE thinking that's just too many.

IMagic aces ICE

Interactive Magic, Wild Bill Stealey's flight sim company, says they have acquired Interactive Creations (ICE). No one is saying what the financial details were, but ICE becomes a wholly owned subsidiary of IMagic and will be called IMagic Online. IMagic Online will concentrate on designing real-time games for the Internet and Web. ICE was known for Warbirds, the real-time flight battle game. Warbirds began as joint venture with Eidos' Domark, but the partnership fell through rather acrimoniously. IMagic's first release under their new label is an online version of Planetary Raiders, a space battle sim.

Meanwhile, there is rumours that LucasArts is eyeing IMagic as an acquisition target itself, but LucasArts denies any such claim. IMagic's Dave Murray says they aren't looking to sell, but they would be open to a special partnership.

Well, you can tell that summer is approaching when the cricket season starts and we get ready to give the Australian team a real drubbing. There is a little slow down now with game releases, what with the E3 and hot days ahead but always plenty of gossip!

Number 11

The PC seems to be forging ahead with no sight of the N64 making any inroads in the UK or Europe, even though the price has been dropped a cool 100 pounds to £149, but the Playstation seems to be impressing everyone with your average owner of a PC in the UK also owning a Playstation as well!

Sex, Drugs, Death...

Nah, but got your attention. The analogy applies to this story. DMA (the Lemmings developers), have been given a massive boost with censor groups taking note of the name and theme of their new game, called Grand Auto Theft from BMG. Apparently this game is going to give the buyers an incentive to steal a car and joyride it, so say the people who have such high morals but have not even seen the game! Strange really, because I cannot remember people walking around the streets with swords and flame throwers when Mortal Kombat was released. With most of the UK tabloids giving a full page to this story, it will certainly add 20,000 to the sales.

Top celebrity does a whoopsie!

One of the biggest games of 96/97 was Tomb Raider, and shortly you will be reading all about this sequel when I visit the team to get the lowdown on what is on offer. It may interest you to know that it is the favourite game of all time from the world renowned writer Terry Pratchett (Discworld series) and he said to me that "I have just finished the Duke Nukem Plutonium Pack, and the Darkening. I was really impressed with Tomb Raider -



Let's get ready to rumble!

Mindscape, who are owned by one of the richest groups in the world, are going to make 1997 a year where people will look at all of their games with added appeal. Well that's what was being conveyed at their recent distributors event, where I was the only journo invited (yes fame for your pommie man). One title is Dark Omen - PC CD ROM - This is the follow up to Shadow of the Horned Rat/Warhammer and is the second title from the Games Workshop licence. This game is coded in-house at Burgess Hill by Mindscape's own development team. This was one of the company's major successes with its great visual presentation and solid gameplay. Over 20 people are working on this sequel. Billed as a real time arcade strategy game. Feedback from fans of the Warhammer game has been intensive and so if you thought that there were any areas in the game that were weak then Dark Omen will please all you fans of this series. The R/D on this game ensures that this will appeal to an even wider audience than the first offering.

The usual immerse and atmospheric long intro sequence introduces the game and then you are thrown into the massive world, to fight, wander and interact.

The improved features within the game include refined full screen true 3D graphics with a palette of up to 32,000 colours giving the game a dynamic and visually impressive look. The vigorous and non linear plots will enthrall the players proving endless hours of gameplay.

The developers have enhanced their 'battle' engine and superior artificial intelligence and tactics will challenge even the most experienced player. Two player mode is also on offer - via network and modem support. Mission discs are also being planned as the game is developed to follow on.

This is a massive game, set within a huge world with creatures/monsters galore. It is a fine balance of strategy and action and can be played in a number of ways. If you are an out and out action player then you can focus on this aspect but still some thought must be put into the resource side of the game. The icing on this game is the use of sound and music which really pulls the player into the dark and sinister world you will be immersed in.. Point and click interface with stats screens galore ensures that you have always something to do, look at or interact with!



Gobsmailed in fact. It felt so real. It was nearly brown trousers time in The Lost Valley, I can tell you. I play computer games a lot and I mean a lot. Sitting in front of a screen writing (books) you need some relaxation and what better way than to load in something like Wing Commander, which is one of my favs. One of the nice things about making lots of money from books is that I can go to the local Virgin Store (plug) and buy what I want!"

Going going gone!

The 3Do company who are no longer involved with the hardware and have a 150 strong development team and are now only a publisher and developer are closing their European base and heading back to the USA. Pity really for they have some great PC games lined up which include Army Men And Uprising, two strategy games that look excellent.

Ed's request.

I am always being asked what the developers are up to in the UK and what's new regarding what they are doing. At present everyone is gearing up to ensuring their games work in conjunction with the new 3D cards. The Matrox Mystique and 3Dfx-based cards like the Orchid Righteous 3D and Diamond Monster 3D are the ones they are using. When it comes to the Diamond Stealth cards, you can forget it, well that is the view of one of the main producers at Psygnosis. To highlight this point Psygnosis, who have in the last year made a name more for themselves on the Playstation than PC, are really focusing on the PC to ensure they are the number 1 boys on both formats and we shall see at least 25 PC titles over the next 12 months. The producers at the company are saying what with the new range of 3D cards plus MMX technology they can now produce games generations better than the Playstation. If you take a look at their new racing game called F1 3DFX then you will be gobsmailed at the speed and realism they have conveyed. But wait, in September they have a new version called F1 97 and that it a 50% improvement which sounds quite remarkable considering the original game is about as good as you can get!

SUBSCRIBE WIN!

You know why you should subscribe to PC PowerPlay. If you're having trouble remembering, here's a quick rundown: It's cheaper, faster, more convenient and you'll raise your social status. Obvious really...

Another sensible reason is that subscribers and subscription renewers have a chance to win the best prizes on offer in each issue of PC PowerPlay. The odds are a lot better than our usual competitions too...

This month we've got:

2 VIDEO BLASTER PCI MULTIMEDIA TOOLKITS

to give away from Creative Labs.

This is a powerful and versatile piece of equipment. It comes with a special CCD CAMERA and here are just a few things you can use it for:

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Bring this enjoyable and relaxing pastime to your PC!

Watch Letterman while you slaughter the online hordes in Diablo - fantastic!

These babies are worth a cool **\$500** and we've got 2 of them to hand out. 2 new or renewing subscribers for the month of July **WILL WIN!**

Last month's winners (4 Rendition Verite Screamin' 3D accelerators):

B McLean, Huntingdale WA.

R Pearce, Cooranbong NSW.

P Cass, Pymble NSW.

M Webster, Kurrajong NSW.

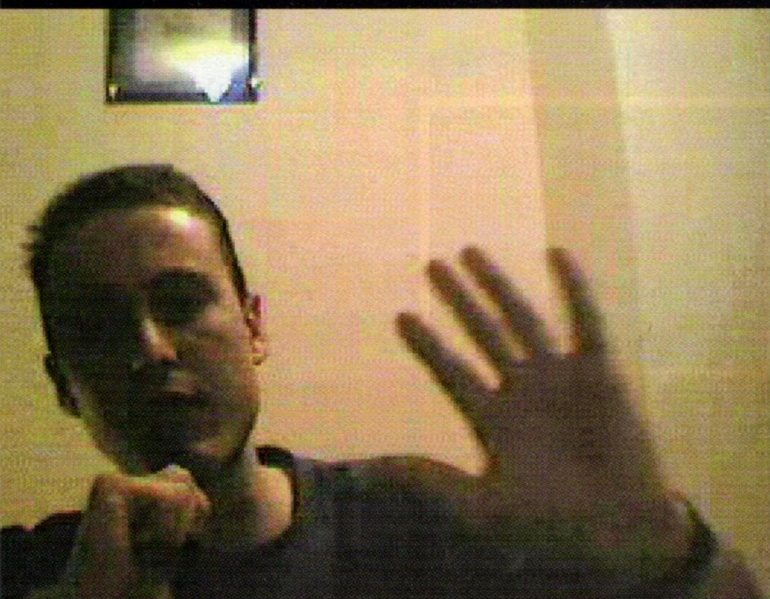
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Comanche 3

Redneck Rampage

Comanche 3

The original Comanche was famous for its ground-breaking 3D graphics, simple yet rewarding flight model and high-action atmosphere. Comanche 2 was a bit of a dodgy one, with the "sequel" really just a scenario disc, but Comanche 3 is what you've been waiting for. The new Voxel Space 2 engine looks the part and allows exciting terrain-masked helicopter combat. We've got a full review in fact, in this very issue.

There are 6 copies of this cool game to win, courtesy of the good people at Electronic Arts.

Q. What is the full military name of the Comanche?

Redneck Rampage

You've read the review, you've played the cover demo and now you know you need this game. We understand completely. Redneck Rampage gives everyone what they really wanted all along - bloody carnage with plenty of funny bits.

6 copies are up for grabs, good luck!

Q. Upon which game's 3D engine is Redneck Rampage built?

Dark Reign

What more can we say about this fantastic game? You've been hanging out for it and now it's here. Real-time strategy taken to the next level is what you get. That means superior graphics 'n all, but that's not important, what matters is the brilliance of the game engine and design. This game has years worth of play in it.

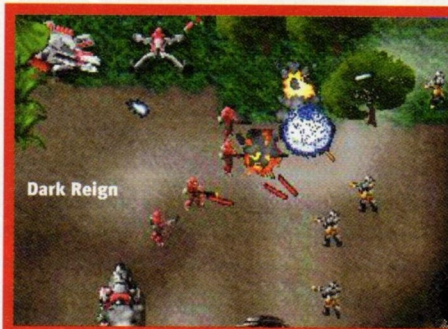
Find out for yourself. Activision have 6 copies of Dark Reign up for grabs so get cracking and enter!

Q. What Australian company made Dark Reign?

Blood

It's what it's all about really, blood and lots of it. This over the top action game has some seriously wicked weaponry and cool level design. We liked it and so will you. Roadshow have kindly let us have 6 copies to give away, thanks Roadshow, you're unreal.

Q. Name any 2 of Blood's weapons.



Dark Reign

Callaghan's Crosstime Saloon

Top game this. Adventure games were becoming stale and dull and developers were beginning an ugly trend of trying to make them sexier by way of 3D graphics and too much FMV. Callaghan's sorts this mess out with classic gameplay, rich characterisation and beautiful hand drawn 2D art.

Win a copy and have a play, you'll love it. Directsoft have 6 to win.

Q. What character do you play in the game?

Issue # 12 winners: CONGRATULATIONS!

NEW QUAKE

A Bird, Lindiforne TAS.
 B Camilleri, Kelso NSW.
 G Brown, Kelmscott WA.
 B Butcher, Eudlo QLD.
 R Piper, Coachwood Park NSW.
 B Lee, Jabiru NT.

MDK

B Ward, Lithgow NSW.
 S Robinson, Gowrie ACT.
 R Reynolds, ESK QLD.
 D Porter, Colyton NSW.
 J Leong, Balaclava VIC.

BATTLECRUISER 3000AD

J Fell, East Keilor VIC.
 C McInnes, Baccus Marsh VIC.
 A Garth, Ballarat VIC.
 M Harris, Trevallyn TAS.
 C Gawn, Clayfield QLD.

LOGITECH SURFMAN

M Liddle, Smeaton VIC.
 J Myatt, Wurtulla QLD.
 C Morgan Karalee QLD.
 G Merkel, Somerville VIC.
 A Tuslan, East Hawthorne VIC.

INTERSTATE '76

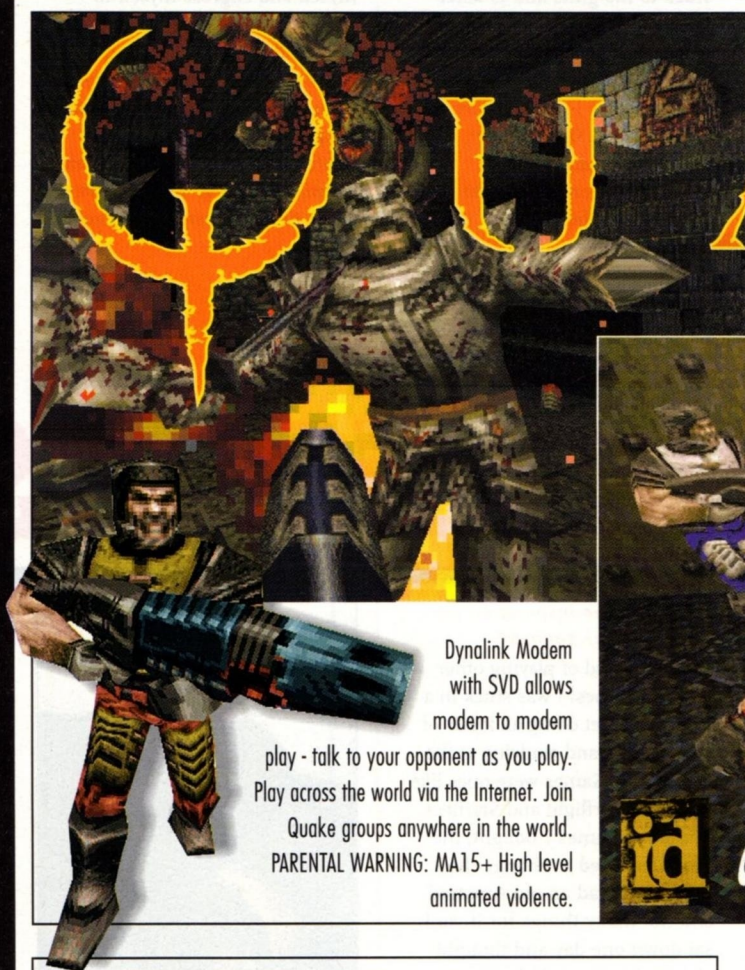
J Lester, Coomera QLD.
 R Brockwell, Grafton NSW.
 N Sice, Hobart TAS.
 B Dorff, Bonnet Bay NSW.
 J Kautto, Adamstown NSW.
 G Hunter, Sunshine VIC.

INDEPENDENCE DAY

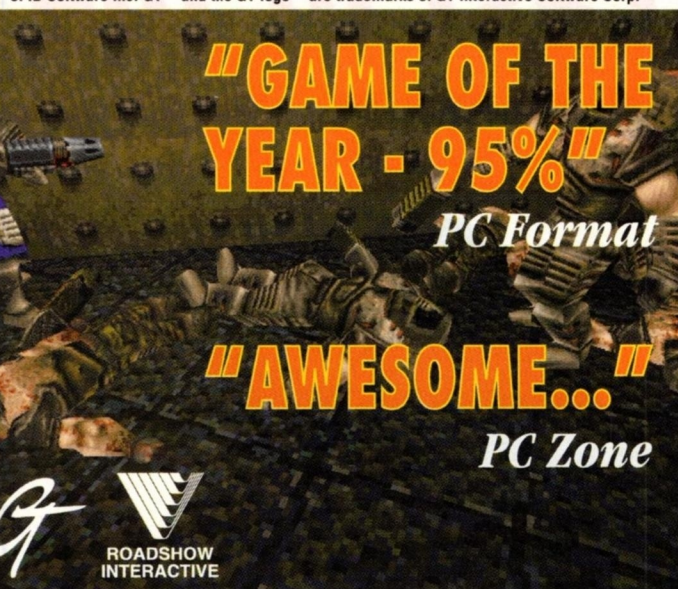
B Lee, Jabiru NT.
 K Hugh, Connells Point NSW.
 M Evans, Quorn SA.
 R Brockwell, Grafton NSW.
 M Brady, Paddington QLD.
 R Kantor, Maroochydore QLD.
 W Oliver RAAF Base NT.
 S Taylor, Newport VIC.
 M Harris, Trevallyn TAS.
 C Metcalf, Coffs Harbour NSW.

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DEREK SMART

The Battlecruiser guy

Last of the LONE PROGRAMMERS



Derek Smart is the epitome of the legacy that is the "lone programmer". If you thought that mega corporations pumping out consistent mediocrity and treating you with contempt was the reality now and for the future, then take a look at this guy. A real fighter in no uncertain terms, Derek Smart's goal to create the most absorbing and complete game ever has cost him his wife, millions of dollars and seven years of his life. Now, reeling after the immoral actions of his last publisher, Take 2, releasing an unfinished game, he has stuck to his guns and is determined to fix it for the many buyers out there.

This month, join us with a world first exclusive interview with the man himself, Derek Smart, and his media manager John Stegenga, where we put the hard questions to them.

How did you keep up with the progress of the technology and apply it to BC3K?

It was an uphill climb, because when I started I couldn't draw a 3D box to save my life. Back in those days the art of development was stuck with a select group of people run by large companies and if you weren't in the know of one of the boys so to speak you were classed as an outsider. So you really couldn't get access to the technology at all.

I had no other choice but to start from the ground up and work my way from there. I had to educate myself and engross myself in many books. I now have over a thousand books on every aspect of graphics. I basically read everything from scratch where 2D and 3D graphics are concerned.

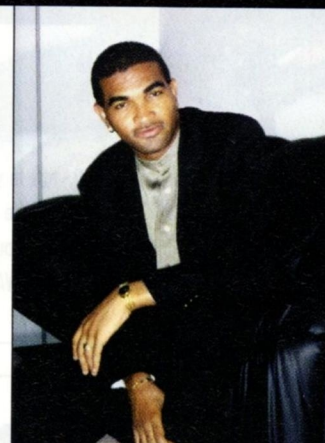
Artificial Intelligence was still in its infancy, and as I was studying it at the time at University, I decided

What was the inspiration for Battlecruiser 3000AD?

I just got tired of playing other people's games! I was stuck in a boring market doing all kinds of crazy things and studying at the same time. Games were ones like Echelon, Starflight and Starfleet. The more games I bought, the more I wanted to change the industry. I had an old Amstrad and not many things for it, so I sat down one day and thought about what it would be like to create a game containing all the elements of every game I played. I was a fan of Flight Sims, Strategy and Ninja Fighter was the best game at the time.

I sat down and put some ideas together and simply drew from knowledge of the games I played. The games like flight sims were the most fun as well as the strategic ones.

Many years ago, the development of games saw the technology move very quickly. VGA was initially the only option then it moved onto Super VGA and new engines for 3D technology were emerging too.



to use the knowledge I learned to build the game I wanted. Every time I bought a game and saw something cool, I wanted to do it and eventually I came up with a pattern schedule for the game.

Did you release BC3K now because you figured that now is the best compromise in the terms of 3D acceleration just coming in, or was it a case that you just finished the game and it was time to get it out?

I did not release it! I have not released it! As far as I'm concerned,

Battle Cruiser 3000AD does not exist in release form. The release of Battle Cruiser was the publisher's decision and one which I did not support. All I'm doing is patching a game which in my opinion was never finished. I've never acknowledged it as finished and released.

Never?

It's out there because of my pledge to gamers. I was a giver when I started. I didn't care about the money, I didn't care!! I had enough money I could live on and it wasn't receptive to the release many, many years ago. My incentive was to write a game that I enjoyed playing and know that if I enjoyed playing it, others would. When you chase technology for years, a lot of things happen and it costs money, it costs time. Throughout the years we've seen the gaming industry come from integrity to crap, as it were, where it's all about the bottom line and one wants to write a game in six months.

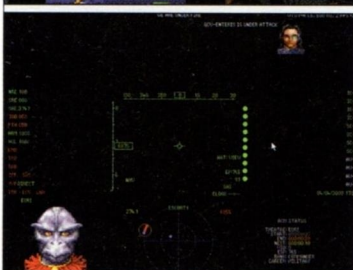
Over the seven years it took to produce BC3K, it must have had an effect on your personal life and the way you see the world...

Oh yes indeed. Well basically it's a double edged sword really. I knew that in England I couldn't get my game to be released because of the gaming industry. I mean in England back in those days everything up there lost. Games happened in the states first and fortunately having dual nationality, I knew that if I wanted to get my game done I had to go there. I sat down and thought about it. I got married young and I was excited about the game - especially after the first demo came out. I had to choose, and PC Games Plus gave me the cover for a game that I hadn't even finished.

That kind of went to my head and it was a boost, a huge boost. My British wife however didn't want to come to the states and we talked about it and had a mutual separation. I went to the US and got divorced.

Just going back a step, the publishers, the Gametek situation, what's the truth, what really happened behind the scenes there?

I can't really for fear of violating my contractual obligations to Gametek and other publishers. I can however say that Gametek wanted to release the game at Xmas, but it wasn't finished. Take



Games as complex as BC300AD take a team of programmers a couple of years to complete. Let one guy do it all and it takes seven...



2 however, went ahead and released it anyway. Gametek then contacted me because Take 2 had sent them a CD ROM of the release despite the fact that I had already told them in person that the game was not finished and did not sanction the release.

I went on to explain that it would take me another six months to complete and yet didn't even know where to start because I had no money and no funding. They asked me if I could fix it, which I answered yes, just wait. Which is what they did. So I got the mailing list together and a few cronies who

were fans of the game and Gametek and proceeded to debug the game and put it all together for release. Gametek wanted to release it in March, and I was targeting the D patch, which was the patch that had all the features in and all the critical bugs fixed for March, but of course the unit slipped and Gametek could see the C4 patch was by all means an excellent patch for the game. They released it without telling us.

We told Gametek not to do it, but they went ahead. I hadn't even written the manual because the game wasn't finished. Instead, they took my 1995 notes for the testers which they used to familiarise themselves with the game, took a few screen shots and shipped it. I only found out my game had shipped when somebody contacted me and asked for help!

(John) It was an interesting one, because I had some associates in the states and we were going to go out and buy a copy to find out what they had put on the disk.

(Derek) We had no idea what was on it! We didn't know how they shipped it. I even thought it was a hoax! I asked a guy who works for me in England to get me a copy of the game from the store, but he already had it!

I immediately contacted Gametek

ed me on Tuesday and explained that they had to release. Some distributors were importing dud U.S. units into the U.K. which were hurting the market and giving the game a bad rap. In reality though, they pulled the same stunt as Take 2; "ship it, Derek will fix it".

(John) I do have to interject because they did do a much classier job than Take 2.

(Derek) Yes, they did. Take 2 stuck the CD in a cardboard sleeve printed in four colours and a 20 page manual that was done in a font that wasn't even type corrected!

(John) Black and white.

(Derek) Take 2 rushed it out, I've received Beta software from people, Alpha software from server manufacturers that had better manuals and documentation with it!!! At least Gametek went to the expense of putting together a professionally done, accurate, condensed manual, with all the features in the patch. The UK release became a best seller that's still on the charts in the U.K. at the time of this interview. It turned out that the U.K. customers had a better experience than the North American customer who ended up buying the box with the Take 2 logo.

(John) The UK version went straight to the top twelve. It went to the top eight and remained in those positions for about three weeks. As of yesterday, it's still in the top twenty, and that's just the C4 patch.

How much support are you going to continue to give the product?

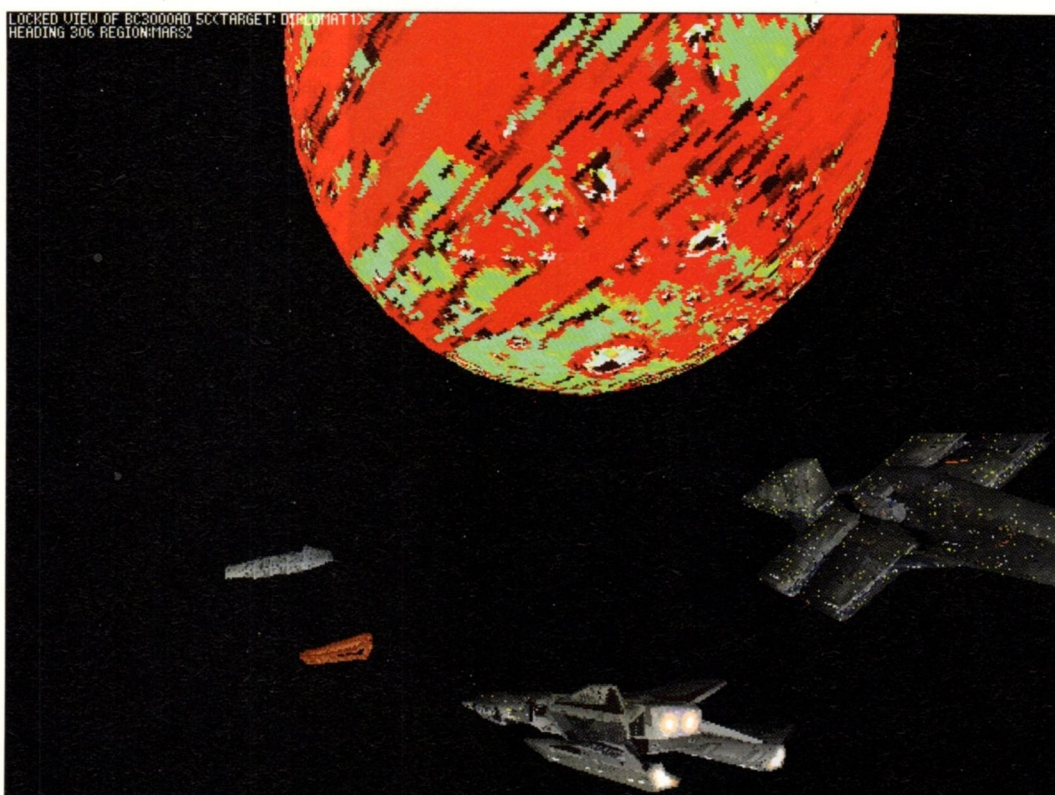
Well, I'm going to continue to support the product. Right now, unfortunately due to funding and resources, I've had to strip out some things from my vision of Battle Cruiser 3000 and I'm winding down development right now. As far as I'm concerned the C5 patch works and I'm wrapping up the manual and the format. Version one which comes out in the Summer is going to mark the

"I did not release it! I have not released it! As far as I'm concerned, Battle Cruiser 3000AD does not exist in release form. The release of Battle Cruiser was the publisher's decision and one which I did not support...I only found out my game had shipped when somebody contacted me and asked for help!"

but they didn't get back to me. I did a press release denouncing the version, which upped their sales tremendously (laugh). They contact-

end of this version of Battle Cruiser. I can't continue patching to fix the game for which I'm not getting paid. Gametek were gener-

LOCKED VIEW OF BC3000AD SC/TARGET: DIPLOMATIX
HEADING 306 REGION: MARS2



ous enough to offer to pay me royalties to support the game for them, but I don't have a large company. There's only myself and a couple of volunteers however, the formation of a larger company is only barely in discussion.

So after 7 years Derek, have you made any money out of Battle Cruiser?

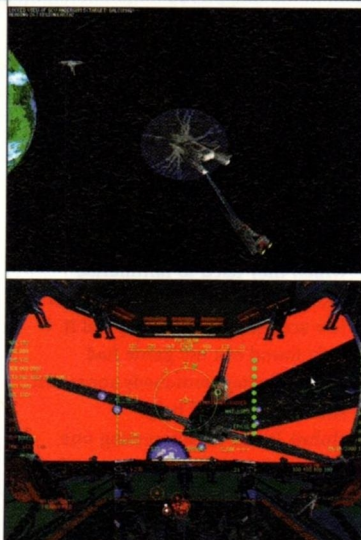
Absolutely not. It's cost me over four million dollars of my own money and some of the publishers money to get Battle Cruiser out, and I haven't made a penny on it.

Do You expect to?

No, I don't. Money spent by Take 2 and Mission Studios, only funded the game for a period of two years. Take 2 handled the marketing, the ads, the packaging and all that. I don't know if they've made money, but I have not made a single penny on Battle Cruiser as it were.

So what are you going to do next? Your reputation as a genius programmer has been enhanced and everybody knows you now, so are you going to move on and do the Richard Garriot and John Romero thing and head up the company and have a large staff?

Well I already have a company and some very cool friends, they all have jobs, and all work part time. For now, I have no intention of expanding the company because once I do that it means I have more responsibilities and I don't



want to be in business. I want to be a game developer! Maybe one day I'll probably hire a couple of in house guys and move on but it's not in the near future. Battle Cruiser was designed to be a gaming environment not a one-off title. Right now though, the Windows 95, version of the game, "Battle Cruiser 3030 AD for Windows" is already in development.

(John) There's a small group of four or five of us who received a surprise E-mail from Derek containing a nice little attachment that gave us a preview of Battle Cruiser's planetary transversal engine for Windows 95. This surprised us all immensely, especially since he'd been doing it in the background instead of writing the manual he's been promising everyone (laugh).

But it was a wonderful thing to

occupy several hours of an evening. Despite no collision detection, it showed that the potential was there to have the engine ported. It runs in high colour and follows the trend of Windows 95 taking over games right now. It's gonna be really good.

(Derek) Battle Cruiser 3030 will have thirty extra features. The most important feature will be high colour, which will give more advanced lighting, high colour surface maps and a new Battle Cruiser class. The player will also be able to fly any ship he wants and buy any ship he wants. Fleet Commander Control, which I ripped out of BC3K, will be included and I'm putting in four player network support as a test for battle-zone. Any player can be a server and play across the Internet. I've known about Open GL for a number of years. I know how to program in Open GL so using the MGL library to port Battle Cruiser from DOS to Win 32 would mean that it would have Direct X and Open GL support therefore supporting every 3D graphics accelerator on the planet.

If it had been released properly to the specifications that you had originally planned, would you have continued in it's development?

Ah yes, it's still going according to plan. Battle Cruiser hasn't been released in a good light. Had it been released properly, I would probably be working on multi player by now.

The world has always needed a truly deep sci-fi adventure/trading/combat/diplomacy & exploration game. Privateer is all over in a weekend, Elite just crashes...BC3K is the one

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- <http://dSPACE.dial.pipex.com/town/square/gq95/>
- <http://www.inconnect.com/~rhilton/parachat.htm> (chat)

So you're not really going to abandon BC 3000 until you are sure that it's in a stable form that the customers will enjoy?

Right. It's in a credible form right now which is why we all call on John and all the founding members to say C5 rev 3 is good. Nobody's reporting bugs anymore, everyone's bored (laugh).

(John) At least the testers are, cause there's nothing for us to hunt down.

(Derek) All that needs to be done now is for the D patch. The testers have suggested that I go and do the manual and not return until it's done. Which is what I've been doing.

How did you fund the development?

(Derek) I was an IBM consultant for a while, then for DEC, Dell and Novell. I basically used my own money to fund BC3K. I got loans from my mother who I owe so much I've lost count. My bank have also provided some loans. My only overheads were buying the tools I needed. Anything I couldn't buy I just wrote myself.

The only 3rd party libraries in Battle Cruiser I use are the sound libraries, and the 2D libraries which I use for graphics card detection. It took so long because back when I started you couldn't find libraries to buy. You wrote your own or signed up with a development house. I did not want to hand over control of my company and product to anyone who was going to chop it up. I was the only one who wrote it, I didn't have 50 or 60 people working for me. It was only three years ago that I went full time after funding from Mission Studios who funded me for a year until JF3 slipped. They were pressured by the distributors and had to make a choice. Bob who had a proven track record with the Jet Fighter series, therefore won the funding. I lost all funding and we had a mutual parting of ways and the rights were returned back to me. Take 2 saw a review of the game in a magazine and called me up, and we were in business.

With all the flammers and abuse you receive, why do you persist on the Usenet?

(Derek) Two reasons. One, sticks and stones, end of story. Very few people can tell me what to do and the only person who could, my father is now dead. As long as he's not around to lecture me nobody else can.

Secondly, The only way you can

hurt me is in my head and since no one has the slightest potential of doing that it doesn't bother me. I don't believe that anyone who spends 40 dollars on a game deserves a bad game but neither do they have the right to be insulting to the person who spends half his life writing it. If you don't like the game, return it. The customer is always right but if they walk into my "shop" with a gun I'm going to hit them with a baseball bat. On the other hand though there is plenty of supporters out there. In fact some of the hardest critics are now testers for BC3K. It's a double edged sword like any democratic society. When it becomes insulting though, fight fire with fire.

If it had been released properly, would you have had the same attitude?

Yes. Even if the game had been released in the proper light, there will always be one more person out there waiting to say something stupid.

(John) MOO 2 was released with problems. Yet the development team hasn't made a presence to say they are going to fix it, though they did. CIV 2 was released with bugs, It was patched but without any official announcements to say that it was going to. Derek however, announced that Take2 had unjustly released the game without his permission, but even without payment he 's going to fix it anyway. The flames although initially immense died down with every patch.

Do you think all the abuse was because the gaming public rarely get a chance to communicate with the developer/programmer?

Not necessarily, because there are plenty of flammers out there with nothing to do. One of my worst critics, Commander Krud didn't even own the game. So, I got his address and sent him a copy of BC3K and he's never criticised me since. Then the guy gets on line and says I never doubted Derek would fix the game, I just didn't like his ethics.

What do you play in your spare time, Derek?

(Derek) I don't play other games, I haven't the time. I live in Miami and I spend a lot of time with my fiancée on the beach. I take my laptop with me, go figure (laugh). Most evenings we spend together and she sits with me watching TV whilst I code.

Jere Lawrence & Ben Mansill

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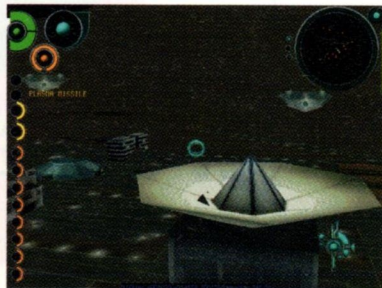
Developments

Flying Saucer

Category	Action/UFO sim
Players	1
Publisher	Postlinear
Available	August/September



Look!-The X-files!
PowerPlay To Get Gillian Anderson
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What do you do when your girlfriend is abducted by aliens? Easy, nip down to the world famous Area 51, steal one of the many UFOs lying around the parking lot and embark on an epic quest to win

her back. Sounds sensible enough, or at least it did to developers PostLinear, who simply wanted to do a UFO combat flight sim and needed a storyline to tie it all together.

About time too, we say. Turning the tables on conventional flight sim wisdom, Flying Saucer puts you in the cockpit of the ship you're probably more used to seeing in your targets. Great care has been taken to model the game's flight characteristics on the way these things are supposed to fly. That's to say, they don't bank, they can come to a complete stop in an

instant and can accelerate in a manner that ought to leave you squished up against the back wall.

Combat will initially be against the best the USAF can muster, being mainly the F-22. As the game develops, the Air Force perfects the reverse-engineering of captured UFOs and begins to field their own variant. Eventually the game ends up in deep space, where you and your UFO are the sole defense against an alien race on their way to take over the world.

Along the way all the cliched locations you'd expect are visited. Mayan temples, Egyptian pyramids, Stonehenge are all there in full 3D, with the smart money betting on an Easter Island visit too.

PostLinear are a new company founded by Ron Martinez, ex-VP of Business and Creative Services at Spectrum Holobyte. They've got 4 other projects under way which use this new 3D engine.

Myth

Category	Strategy
Players	1-8
Publisher	Bungie
Available	August/September

Why Myth? Cos that's what effeminate archers do when they don't hit.



No resources to manage, no buildings to build, no endless source of cannon fodder via a carefully crafted industrial machine and no dinky top-down view. How then, is this a "real-time strategy game"? Because that's what you get - strategy combat, happening in real-time.

We've all been lulled into the C&C way of real-timing these days, but the genre has a vast untapped wealth of potential and Bungie (famous for the Macintosh Doom-clone Marathon) think they've nailed it.

While ostensibly a multiplayer



game, Myth does have set missions for single play. Each has a set army, although some missions feature reinforcements which arrive during the course of a battle. Nothing fancy, just pure strategy, is what you get. Units which survive a battle gain experience points and are carried over to subsequent missions. The only concession Bungie seem to have made to traditional elements of the genre is blood - lots of blood. As you can see from the screen-

shots the battlefield is overflowing with the stuff. Any blood let stays, any severed heads roll down the slope, severed limbs litter the place... You get the idea.

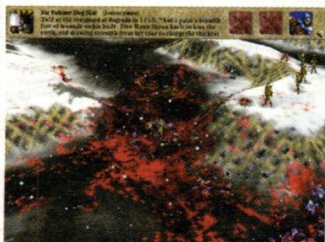
The terrain is fully 3D and camera angles move to provide the most sensible view in a system similar to Tomb Raider's dynamic camera.

Bungie are busy optimising the code to get the most out of the engine. They want "2 or 3 hundred" simultaneous unit on the battlefield on an average machine.



Tomato sauce, green jelly and waffles.

The release date for Myth is uncertain at this stage due to its unique nature, but count on it being out by the end of 1997.



Max BABE-O-MAT

Swingers guide



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NMMAX 666

X-Car

Category	Racing
Players	1-TBA
Publisher	Bethesda
Available	July/August

hole thing smells very much
eed for Speed, but bigger and
more. More tracks, more cars,
misable reality controls" even.
your probable outlay of \$89.95,
u get: 8 tracks based on real cir-
its, 10 pretend tracks, 4 test tracks
"hi-tech, near future race
es". That's a whole lot more
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ing your car for peak performance.

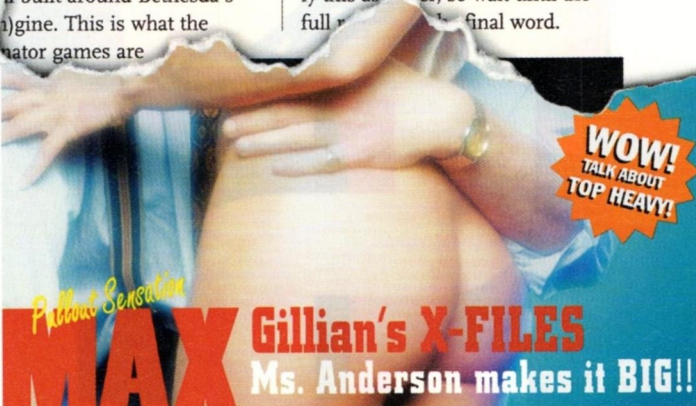
Multiplayer support will be
included out of the box. That
means network and modem.
Nothing has been said of internet
play yet and it appears the olde
worlde direct serial cable seems to
have been ignored completely.

More cars and tracks than other
games does not automatically quali-
fy this as better, so wait until the
full... final word.

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Flying Saucers

Category	Action/UFO sim
Players	1
Publisher	Postlinear
Available	August/September

Look! The X-files!
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SEX

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Atlantis

The lost tales

Category	Graphical adventure
Players	1
Publisher	Cryo
Available	August

More bloody lost world/
x-files/easter island things.
Probably

Yes, it's another stunningly beautiful adventure from French developers Cryo. Set, funnily enough, in Atlantis you take the part of Seth, a 'companion' to Queen Rhea, and your task is to protect her and rescue her when she gets kidnapped. There's 100 chapters to make

your way through, with an estimated playing time of around 30 hours and all the scenarios look absolutely fantastic.

The best looking part of Atlantis, though, is the intro sequence - truly one of the best we have ever seen. The images are crystal clear, and beautifully rendered and with

the atmospheric music and cinematic effects it makes for a truly amazing experience. The game itself looks absolutely stunning as well. A first person perspective is used, with a 360 degree rotatable view via the mouse.

However, you can't move in 360 degrees

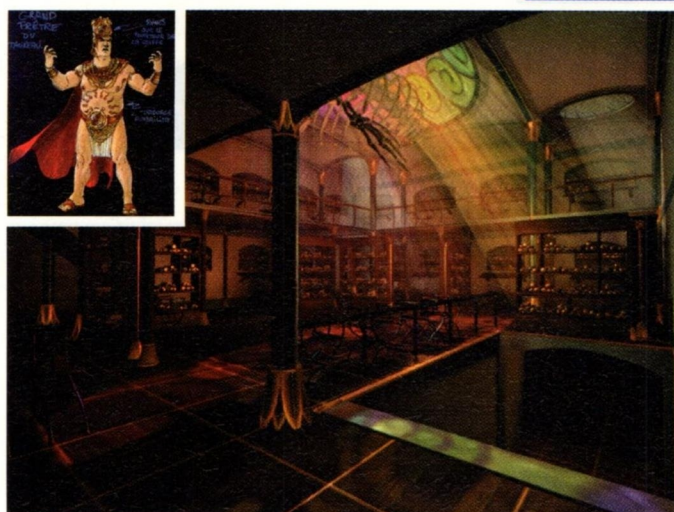


X-Cars? Wasn't that a show with Peter Brock about irresponsible drivers? Or has this game got Gillian Anderson too?

A driving game is only as good as its driving model. If it feels crappy, then no amount of flash graphics can save it. We have only played a demo version of X-Car, which was

less than impressive, so judgement will have to wait until review time.

The idea is to put you in control of "a collection of revolutionary high-tech, race bred automobiles" - just like those found in Need for Speed/NFS II, we suspect. In fact,



unfortunately, and this area is where the game might tend to fall down juuust a little - gameplay.

There are around 50 characters to interact with throughout the story, and 5 worlds to explore but in the preview version we had a look at there was a lot of aimless wandering around. At first, it's no big deal, because the scenery is so beautiful that you tend not to notice. After a while though it does get a tad annoying, and there didn't seem to be enough control over your movement either. You might be able to look

around 360 degrees, but mostly all you can do is move in one or two directions. Then there's the characters - interaction is fairly limited, and we found ourselves just running through the options presented (talk about the Queen, talk about someone else, etc) until something happened. However, it was only a preview version, and the puzzles were pretty good. Atlantis: The Lost Tales looks fantastic, but as to whether it turns out to be a fantastic game overall we'll have to let you know.

X-Car

Category	Racing
Players	1-TBA
Publisher	Bethesda
Available	July/August

the whole thing smells very much like Need for Speed, but bigger and with more. More tracks, more cars, "customisable reality controls" even. For your probable outlay of \$89.95, you get: 8 tracks based on real circuits, 10 pretend tracks, 4 test tracks and 15 "hi-tech, near future race machines". That's a whole lot more than Need for Speed.

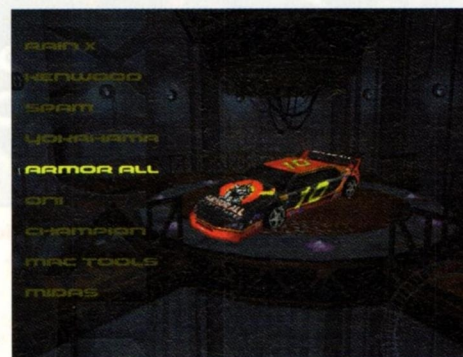
It's all built around Bethesda's 3D X(n)gine. This is what the Terminator games are built with and they run in SVGA at good speeds on a reasonable system, so after tweaking it for a driving game the results should be good.

Many car setup options are incorporated, including recorded telemetry data to assist configur-

ing your car for peak performance.

Multiplayer support will be included out of the box. That means network and modem. Nothing has been said of internet play yet and it appears the olde worlde direct serial cable seems to have been ignored completely.

More cars and tracks than other games does not automatically qualify this as better, so wait until the full review for the final word.



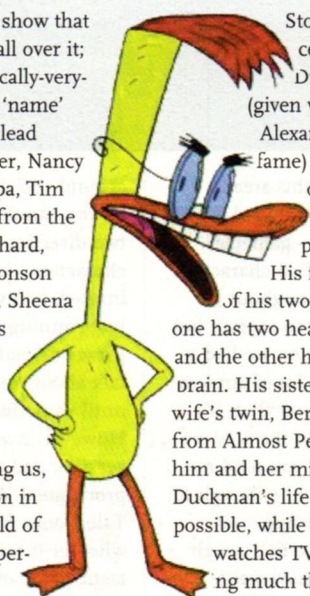
Duckman-

The legend of the fall

Category Graphic adventure
Players 1
Publisher Playmates Interactive
Available August/ September

It's the television show that has cult written all over it; quirky and politically-very-incorrect characters, 'name' Hollywood actors in lead roles (Jason Alexander, Nancy Travis, Dweezil Zappa, Tim Curry), and cameos from the likes of Sandra Bernhard, David Duchovny, Bronson Pichot, Lisa Kudrow, Sheena Easton and others, as well as hilarious plots and biting funny satire.

For those as-yet-unenlightened among us, Duckman is a cartoon in the anti-Disney mould of the Simpsons, with perhaps (dare we say it) even more of a dark side. We've only recently had the pleasure of viewing this classic show in Australia so if you haven't seen it yet, get into it now - Monday nights at around 11 on the



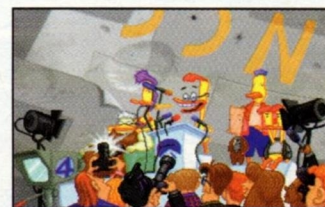
Stokes network. The central character, Duckman himself (given voice by Jason Alexander of Seinfeld fame) is a complete loser of a private detective and failed single parent family man.

His family is comprised of his two and a half sons - one has two heads for one body and the other has one body and no brain. His sister in law, and dead wife's twin, Bernice (Nancy Travis from Almost Perfect) lives with him and her mission is to make Duckman's life as miserable as possible, while Granma-ma just watches TV and farts (achieving much the same effect that Bernice aspires to).

Every hero needs his sidekick and straight guy though, and Duckman's is Cornfed, a pig with a taste for solving crime. His tireless efforts usually save Duckman from his stupidity, and his deadpan delivery is often where some of the funniest lines emerge -

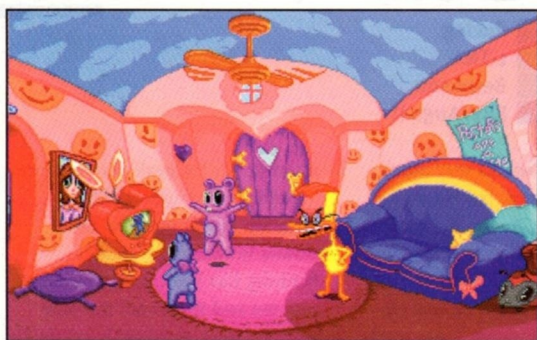
imagine a cross between Joe Friday and Stephen Wright. Then there's the office assistants, Fluffy and Uranus, annoyingly cute care bear like creatures that get squashed, mutilated, and generally destroyed on a regular basis by Duckman, yet they remain as cheerful as ever - they're essentially your Ned Flanders type characters.

And this provides a nice little segue into the game itself, we've only had a look at a fairly limited demo version, but there's plenty of opportunity to traumatise the annoying little assistants. For example, clicking on the fish tank in their house (where they are trying to train a piranha to be nicer to other animals) will get you a nice little animation of Duckman stuffing the bears into the fish tank and them getting their heads bitten off. Not to worry though, cheerfully singing 'this is the way we sew our heads, sew our heads...' they'll soon be ready to assist you once again. There's always the microwave to test out...



It's not all destructifying innocent-looking annoying care bears, though, there's a plot as well! It starts from the peak of Duckman's career, his TV show is a hit, he can afford expensive prostitutes, and everything is looking good for him. At the studios though, a decision is made to enhance Duckman's image, and replace him with a virile and good looking character. So begins Duckman's fall from fame (hence the title), and so begins your task to

drag him back up from the abyss to stardom once again. It's essentially a point and click adventure, with an authentic animated style - apparently there's over 10,000 hand-rendered frames for around 40 locations and 80 scenes. Then there were the voices - Duckman sounded suspiciously like someone trying to sound like Duckman rather than David Jason's Duckman, but the blurb proclaims that 'many of the stars from the show' feature in the dialogue. In truth, it doesn't really matter all that much, all the voices we heard were fine (and plenty funny too). It looks good, sounds (mostly) good, and if it's anywhere close to the standard of the TV show, then it's going to be one to watch out for. We'll let you know more when we get the full version.



Duckman - looking very much like the sort of graphic adventure we will get lots of letters in Oracle about.





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Age of Empires

Category Real time action strategy
Players 1-TBA
Publisher Microsoft
Available August/ September

This, simply put, looks absolutely fantastic. How many of you played Civ2 and thought how much fun it would be to have real time combat sequences? How many of you played Warcraft 2 or C&C and wondered what it would be like if the games had more scope - like 10,000 years worth of development? Well, ok, maybe not all that many of you had thoughts along those lines, but it's a damn good idea isn't it? In fact, it's a damn good idea that ex-MicroProse developer Bruce Shelley had and

when he teamed up with Ensemble Studios it was turned into a concept and soon you're going to be able to get your grub by hands on what might be an awesome game.

As with another release from (roughly) the same genre, Dark Reign, Age Of Empires has taken all the good bits from Civ2, C&C and Warcraft2 and added plenty of enhancements as well. To begin with, there's going to be a wide range of victory conditions for enhanced replayability. As well, there will be plenty of technologi-

cal developments (more than one games worth) so that you can develop with a number of different strategies, again for single

and multi player replayability. Then there's the map editor and generator, so you'll be able to create and edit maps, as well as the opportunity to play in an infinite number of worlds.

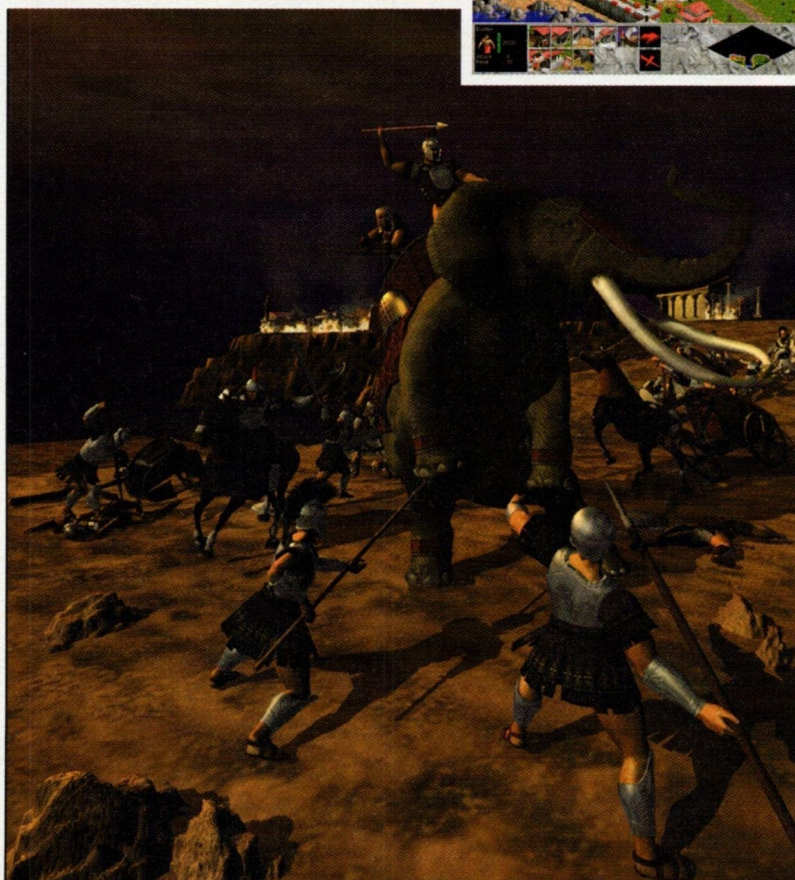
One of the greatest disappointments with Civilisation2 was the lack of multiplayability, and this marred an otherwise excellent game, and one of the major criticisms of Civnet was that it was so buggy. Shelley has a somewhat unique view on the whole multiplayer issue, and has said "Multiplayer is very hot right now...[but] I think it's very premature to ignore the single player". He says that Age of Empires has been designed from the ground up as a multiplayer game, though

it also has substantial single player support with multiple levels of difficulty and 12 different civilisations to choose from. Then there's the AI for single and multiplayer games - Ensemble promise a robust AI that will form alliances with other AI and

C&C meets Civ2 on an even bigger scale with heaps of improvements to boot. Oh yes!

humans as well as make war with both when it suits their purpose. They also promise a free 'Internet lobby matching service' - not a games server a'la Westwood Chat or Battle.net, but a good move nonetheless, as well as support for network and modem play of course.

It all sounds pretty damn great to use, with the ability to build and maintain huge empires that span the dawn of civilisation through 10,000 years, recreate historical battles like Sparta and Athens, or Persia and Macedonia, and make use of around 40 unit types, upgrades and buildings. There's more too - true terrain elevation, massive maps, a detailed economic model, diplomacy, trade - and all in real time! It really looks like it might be a jaw dropper of a game. At PowerPlay we tend to get a bit jaded about games at times, particularly those in the real time action strategy genre, but upcoming releases like Dark Reign and Age of Empires reaffirm our faith considerably. As soon as we get our hands on a copy, we'll let you know whether it's as good as it sounds - let's hope it is.



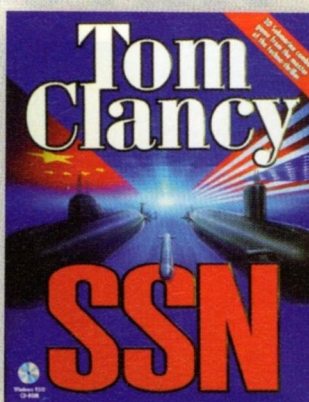
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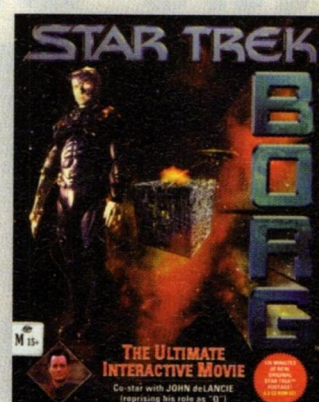
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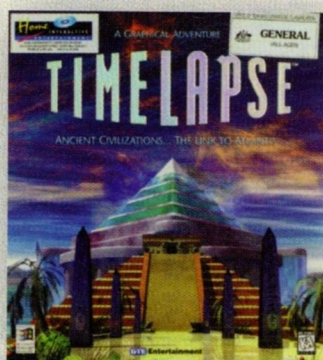
HIND+Apache Longbow, G8+



S.S.N., MA15+



Star Trek Borg, MA15+



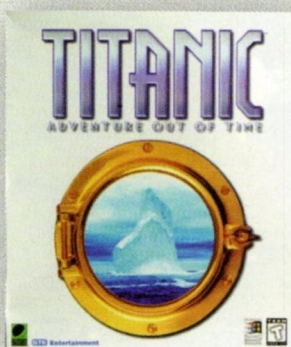
Timelapse, G



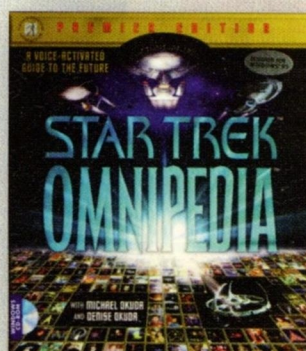
Smart Games



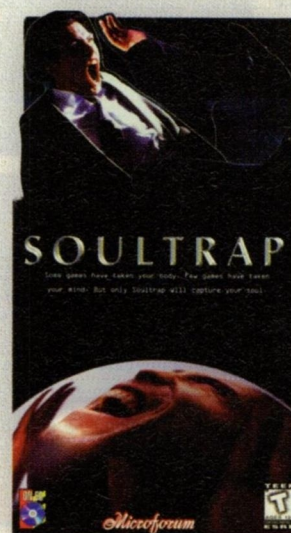
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Titanic, G8+



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Little Big Adventure 2

Category	Adventure
Players	1
Publisher	Activision
Available	September

Quite some time has passed since the first opportunity I had to journey to the beautiful planet of Twinsun - so-called because it is indeed situated directly between two suns, creating a kind of 'polar ring' at the equator. It's also been nearly three years, in fact, since I waved a teary goodbye to Twinsen himself, and all his friends (his lovely wife Zoe, the Quetches, the Grobos, the Rabibunnies, the EVIL-and-not-fun-at-all-really Dr Funfrock) on Principal Island. I don't know about you, but I've missed them all terribly.

So please excuse me for getting all extravagantly carried away and shamelessly excited about the news that Little Big Adventure 2 is in the process of being completed by those French folk at Adeline and primed for release later this year. Yay!

Will it be like old times again? Will it be as elegantly playable? Will the story be told in that beguilingly, heartbreakingly innocent fashion again? Will it manage to tippy-toe along that same precise line between drama-charged adventure and swashbuckling action? Will the graphics possess the same extraordinary beauty? Will the cast of characters be as lovable and memorable and charismatic and adorable? Will it have abandoned that appallingly ill-conceived save game method?

According to Adeline, the answer to all these questions is an unreserved "YES!". It will be like old times again - only better. For the moment, however, we'll just have to take their word for it. Since, as



Exquisite graphics even better than the first one. It looks like Adeline are onto another winner



is increasingly the case, the only pre-release information we can get hold of (beyond the most general and vague gameplay indications) is what the graphics will be like. Either gameplay is viewed as negligible, or it's much easier to hype the visual side of things. Or perhaps a combination of both. Hmm.

So we know that, while LBA presented a flick-screen isometric view, its sequel has evolved to incorporate a moving camera view. Thus, when you enter a location

you will see Twinsen from the usual perspective, but once he

starts walking around the camera will pan or swing to accommodate the best and most useful view. Backgrounds are promised to be more sumptuously detailed than the already pristine SVGA splendour of the first game. The animation, too, will be of an even higher quality.

As far as the gameplay is concerned, Twinsen will still be able to operate in several different behaviour modes (you know, Athletic, Aggressive, Discreet, and Normal)

and certainly ought to have retained his wicked 'magic ball' (as well as having collected a number of additional weapons in the mean time). Oh, and saving games will thankfully be a much simpler and more straightforward task. Phew!

If some doubt still lingers as to whether Adeline can scale such mighty heights again, just remember this. With Alone In The Dark, LBA, and Time Commando already inked in as PC classics, they haven't made a poor game yet. Why on earth would they want to start now?

David Wildgoose





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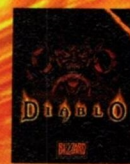
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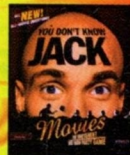
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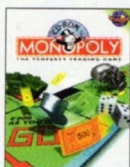
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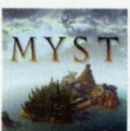
Monopoly



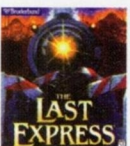
Trivial Pursuit



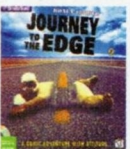
Risk



Myst



The Last Express



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Auran

From Brisbane comes the next world-beating killer game.

by Ben Mansill

How does an unknown Australian company with no track record gain the excited attention of the world's gamers? This is no easy feat - especially considering the fact that Dark Reign is about to enter a genre which is more critically analysed than any other.

We gamers know the answer. It's a simple truth that transcends flash graphics or star-studded FMV - it's game-play and Dark Reign has it in abundance. The old generation of real-time strategy had gone about as far as it could. It was time for an overhaul. New unit and terrain graphics are no longer enough. Slight re-workings of established methods are becoming dull. We need something completely revolutionary and Dark Reign delivers.

This is the next generation of real-time strategy and it's come from a small Brisbane company with no previous experience.

We had to know more. So, right when the development team was at its peak of ultra-productive super-efficiency, finishing Dark Reign and incorporating those finishing touches, I visited and made them spend a whole day showing me their gear. Yes, Dark Reign will be 1 day late and it's *my fault*.

The Team

Having spent time in the offices of big 'n fabulous overseas developers, I wasn't expecting much... Boy was I surprised! Auran is a shining example of how a development team ought to be run. Never again will I tolerate late games! If

all game developers were as organised and professional as Auran then there would be no late games. Period.

It starts and finishes with the team. These guys not only turn up to work in their Dark Reign Development Team shirts - they even iron them! Wild eh?! All have

a passion for the project that's impossible to fake. They bubbled excitedly as the most minor of details was explained. We played a few network games; "please be gentle with me" I begged.

They sincerely agreed to take it easy and just demonstrate the game features... Well, that was before the game started, once underway it was all on. No special consideration, I think they'd forgotten I existed - they were playing their game and that was all that mattered. These were people who had their dream job and knew it. Dark Reign really is a game for gamers, by gamers. They'll be playing the full game for months to come just as excitedly as you will be. It would be nice to imagine that all games were made by such people...

The guy that made it happen

Greg Lane is the boss. He, unlike most game producers, is passionately concerned with both getting the game to the gamers on time and making sure it's done right. Most producers are only concerned with the former. Greg also has grand plans for Auran. After Dark Reign is completed the team heads off to Fiji for a break (take note employ-

ers: overseas holidays *motivate*), then they move to their glamorous new premises and get cracking on the next project. You'll be hearing a lot about Auran in the coming years. They are destined to become a major player in the international games market, that looks certain.

Greg took time out to answer a few questions about the game, the company and the future:

How did you get started? How does one become the head of a games development company?

Auran started when my partner and I were talking about future business opportunities during a new years eve party in 94/95. I had always been involved with computers and wargames and we thought that a window of opportunity existed for a new company to write a multiplayer strategy game.

From a business/financing perspective, what process takes place between the initial concept and getting a shrinkwrapped box on the shelves?

That's a big question and without writing a novel, one that's hard to answer. I suppose that in a nutshell it's very important to have a concept and focus on it. It's very easy to loose track and that just adds time to the project. From a finance point of view,

things can grow a lot during a project like this. You need good financial backing to be able to grow at the rate we have.

How many people current work for Auran and a broad breakdown of how many people do what?

We currently have 22 people. 15 are directly involved with Dark Reign and the other 7 are management, marketing, web site and office staff. Of the 15 doing work on Dark Reign, 8 are programming staff and 7 are art staff.

The employees attitude in the Auran offices is of razor-sharp professionalism combined with passionate

enthusiasm - from a managers perspective you've got to be pretty happy with

that, how hard was it to assemble such a team and how do you maintain the atmosphere?

To find these people was very hard. We have a well defined set of criteria that we look for in our staff and part of that is the ability to work well in a team environment. I think that goes a long way to maintaining the right atmosphere in the office and the other thing that really helps is the ping pong table.



The star programmers (modestly hiding behind a wall)

Do you have any advice for anyone wanting to get into the industry - artists or programmers for example?

Send in your resume! We are growing at an incredible rate and we are always looking for great new talent. In the case of programmers, they must have an excellent understanding of C and C++ and have been coding for some time. For artists, they must be creative and be excellent 2D or 3D artists, again with a number of years work experience.

Did you have a clear plan for Dark Reign's development, with a set schedule, or was it a case of keep at it for as long as it takes?

The DR schedule did grow during development, but only as a result of a broader market acceptance of the product, and not due to feature creep as is often the case. During each of these growth spurts we have had a defined set of goals for the product and we made sure we met these before continuing.

The real-time strategy genre began with Dune 2 and was brought to the forefront with C&C and Warcraft, now it's looking like every developer

either has a similar game already out, or one in development. Thus far they've all been fairly dull variations on the theme without any real progress being made, how will Dark Reign fare and why?

I believe Dark Reign will fare very well. It is a mixture of all of the games you mentioned, but also includes a vast array of new features that none of our competitors have. With that mix I think we can only do better than anything else on the shelf.

What do you like and dislike about both C&C and Warcraft/2?

Firstly I think all of them are great games. We still play them and I think we drew on these games quite a bit. C&C has a really good feel to it. The movement and terrain is nice and overall it's a fast paced game. War 2 I think excels in strategy and game balance. It is so well thought out and plays so easily that it's a good example of the KISS principle.

It seemed that you have many more ideas than could be included in the game, can you use this overflow of concepts in later games? Does Dark Reign have a future of sequels ahead of it?

Indeed it does. We have a list which we call the production overflow, which is to say all the features that won't make it into Dark Reign. Work on Dark Reign 2 starts in late July and if you think Dark Reign is amazing wait till you see DR2!

What other projects do you have planned?

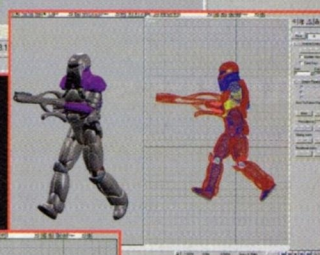
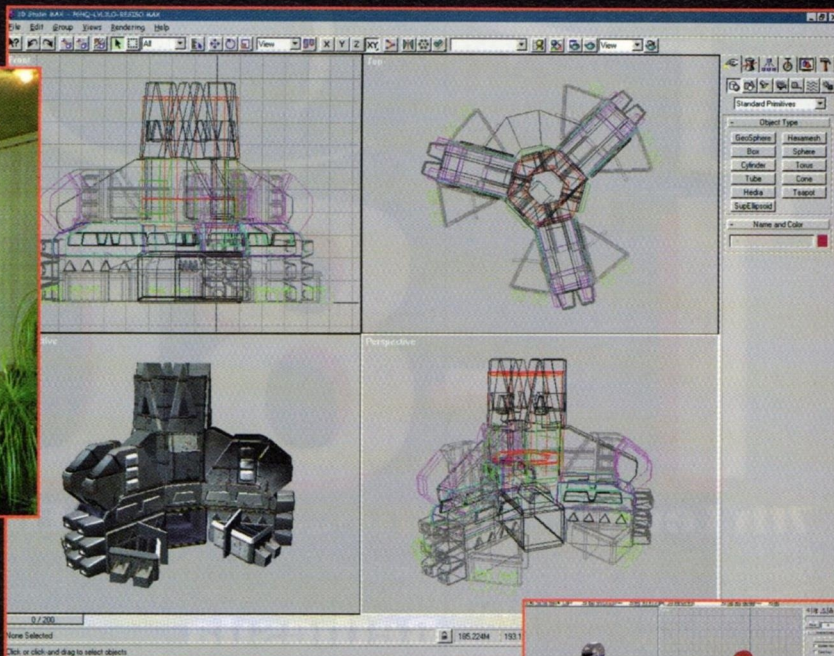
We have a number of other projects planned during the course of the next year. Each of our projects are numbered internally as P1, P2, P3 etc. Dark Reign is internally code named P1D. We have plans for P1C, P1H, P1V, P2, P3 and P4. The research and design work on a number of these projects has already been started or even completed in some cases. We don't wish to let the cat out of the bag on what they will be just yet, suffice to say that all of them will push the genre's they are in to new heights!

What's the relationship with Activision? Are you happy with their contribution?

Activision are co-developing Dark Reign with us. The division of labour is such that the design work is done in LA and we do the art and coding here. There are a few areas of overlap but as a rule that's where it stands.

Interest in Dark Reign is very high, have you had many direct enquiries from keen gamers?

Absolutely, we always answer every single mail or email that comes into the office. We also participate in a weekly meeting on IRC (you can check our web site for details - <http://www.auran.com>) in which we answer questions concerning the game.



An abundance of 3D rendered models is found in Dark reign, all done by the crew below



How do you see the future of the internet for gamers? Is it the absolute future of gaming, or more an attractive value-adder for greater multiplayer versatility?

I think that people will still want to play games standalone, but that the internet will be a huge growth area in the future. I believe that we will shortly see an explosion of internet based multiplayer games. Also, with the advent of recent low latency connections, online gaming can only prosper.

What do you play for fun Greg? What's in your personal collection that you treasure and will always have around for a game?

I play War 2, Civilisation and a board game titled World in Flames (which by the way is also an Australian product). My all time favourite though and one that I still enjoy is DOOM.



In future war, foot-soldiers will look like this. The two protagonists - the Raiders and (inset) the Guardians.

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The big one has hit. You can safely delete those “not bad” games you thought you might play again one day, for here is Dark Reign and all the strategy gaming you’ll need for quite a while...

Now this is exciting. The games industry has been abuzz with the likes of “It’s supposed to be better than Command and Conquer”. In anticipation of the release, web pages have sprung up proclaiming a new era of Real Time Combat is about to dawn upon us. Even the usually hardened and cynical corridors of

PowerPlay were the scene of some shaky knee excitement when it finally arrived for review. Dark Reign is here and oh my, things are looking sweet.

Good guys, bad guys

The scene is set. Earth and its’ space-bound empire is a dark and desperate place. The fascist bully boy (boo-hiss) Imperium are up against The Freedom Guard, the type of people that fight for the good things in life. Well in this case, they are fighting for the right to drink water and not be killed at the age of 25. Seems a fair cause to fight for.

The next level

Dark Reign promised many significant enhancements over previous Real Time Combat



games. One of the most interesting being units involved in greater interaction with the environment. All of the land types, from swamps, roads and mountains have an effect on particular units. This sees Infantry slowing down as they cross a mountain, but fast footing it over plains. Vehicles gaining speed down that strategically important road, but coming to a crawl through that swampy area. In an aim for further realism each unit’s sight is guided by its position amongst everything. For example, an Infantry unit will see further while on top of a hill than a unit placed in a neighbouring valley. While all this is the “next level”



Old-style tank melee’s still occur, but this is a game of high-tech trickery.

+ Plus

www.activision.com
www.auran.com -The Australian designers of Dark Reign.





Even with a base facing imminent destruction, you can still pack up & rebuild elsewhere



The interface is powerful & sensible. Beautiful

of real time warfare, it's initially hard to get to grips with. If you are (like myself) a C&C fan, grouping together some units and sending them over to the far side of the map with a click on the radar display is a common practice. Dark Reign on the other hand often requires unit supervision as you send that strikeforce into a mountainous region, where both their line of sight and movement can be adversely affected.

Like C&C and very unlike Warz, both sides in Dark Reign have a different arsenal of goodies. The Freedom Guard tend to rely upon mobility and stealth, but in a very non wimpy kick ass way. You know where the Imperial base is, but keeping an eye on it is proving quite difficult. How about morphing a scout into a tree and sending him over to the perimeter of the base to keep an eye on your enemy? Phasing is an equally interesting pastime, allowing specific units the ability to sink into the ground concealing their posi-

tion. This can lead to leaving your base seemingly undefended, as the enemy marches in only to have 15 Phasing Tanks rise up out of the ground. A sight to truly behold.

Multiplayer balance

The Empire are more of your up front, hit'em hard boys, but they can still pull the occasional rabbit out of the hat (and a bloody mean one at that). Big Tanks, Cyborg Infantry and fearsome flying machines... these bully boys get all the mean stuff. One of the meanest being the Hostage Taker. Picture kidnapping enemy troops, brainwashing them and releasing the blighters (under your control) with bombs planted on their backs. Warning, this tactic could cause friends to suddenly take an immense dislike to you.

Base construction relies upon the harvesting of precious water, which is then sold for credits. Each building constructs specific types of units, the aim being to upgrade these facilities so as you can produce the really go get'em equipment. The art of construction, Dark

Reign-style comes in the balancing act you have to continually strive for. Do you pursue a strong infantry army complete with Medics and supported by Phasing, or do you go for artillery and air support? This will all depend on the environment and of course investigation of your enemies plans. Of course you could decide to upgrade all your buildings and go for the lot, but then, water can be a scarce and hard fought commodity.

Busy but bearable

With all these complex going ons, you could gain an impression of Dark Reign being a nightmare of mouse clicking and infinite sub menu after sub menu. Not so with features like the ability to stack production of units, which was well used in KKND. You just click on a production icon a set amount of times, and the factory will produce that many... credits permitting. It's a thumbs up feature that lets you go off and concentrate on



Fast recon bikes meet heavy tanks



Buildings can be placed almost anywhere

battles when the need arises.

Dark Reign is a very major step in Real Time Strategy. The title "C&C/War2 clone" does not do it justice. The designers have succeeded in giving each unit a particular role to play in certain environments. There aren't too many units that will be relegated to the "I'll never need that" category, i.e. the spy from Red Alert. The strong emphasis on subversive activities, as well as straight up troop vs troop combat does require a strong attention span at times, but that comes with the territory. This game is going to rock the world of real time combat in a big way.

Peter Sharpe

94%

Category	Strategy
Players	1-8
Publisher	Activision
Price	\$89.95
Rating	TBA
Available	Now

For Lots of decision making with large variety of units, weapons and the like that all mesh together for a compelling experience.

Against In the early stages, it can be tough to pick out the landscape, eg. height of mountains etc.

Need P90, 8Mb RAM, WIN95

Want P100, 16Mb RAM

DARK REIGN continued

COOL FEATURES

Dark Reign has numerous highlights which lift it above the crowd, here are but a few:

- **Huge maps** that can contain eight player LAN games with minimal claustrophobia.
- **The Infiltrator** -Both sides have access to this very useful character. The idea is to sneak him into an enemy building and steal the plans for certain enemy units which you would love to build and add to your arsenal. Upon gaining the plans, you then have to get him back to your H.Q. safely. To make life difficult, the Infiltrator can get discovered during the covert activities which can blow the whole deal. An added advantage is the ability to morph into an enemy infantry unit. Makes the Red Alert spy look very lacklustre indeed.
- **The Amper** -A nasty Imperial device that injects soldiers with a substance that fully heals, but then slowly poisons. Funny how those enemy soldiers are looking greener by the second.
- **The Phase structure** -If your strategy requires lots of phased/hidden units protect this building with your big guns. If it gets damaged your phased units could suddenly become very conspicuous.
- **Phase Runner** -Freedom Guard favourite. A transport that has capacity for five units. It travels underground (and unseen by enemy) to any location, rises up and does the unload. Perfect for that friendly unannounced drop in.
- **Waypoints** -Basic waypoints allows you to place markers which your troops follow, perfect for avoiding that "suspicious" looking mountain pass. An advanced option will have you setting up patrol routes and regular paths, useful for stopping your freighters from straying into dangerous territory.
- **Intelligent troops** -There is a menu setting allowing troops to enter various states of mind including Guard mode through to "Assertive kick some at all costs" mode. Use this in conjunction with waypointing for some interesting behaviour.
- **Decoy Building** -The Freedom Guard get to use these diversional structures which happen to be cheap and use no power. Fall over like wet cardboard though, use them to buy time.
- **Decoy Units** -Very tricky Imperial option. Make a huge squadron of decoy Tachion Tanks and park them on the perimeter of your base. Your friend/enemy will think twice before engaging your base after eyeballing your assembled forces. A very likely game turning, fear inducing strategy.
- **The Imperial Temporal Gate** -Just like the Chronosphere in Red Alert except you can teleport up to five units, and living things go through unharmed... definite possibilities. The Infiltrator comes to mind, but remember you have to get him back home.
- **Veteran soldiers** -Some units will gain battlefield experience and consequently acquire extra abilities. The Scout can upgrade to the Sniper which allows for picking off enemy infantry. The normally pacifist Mechanic can turn nasty and become a Saboteur, dropping installations to half their strength. Keep those boys in the field and they will work for you.



Setting waypoints (why didn't they think of that before?)

(Top) the Temporal rift swallows buildings

THE UNITS

FREEDOM GUARD

Spider Bike -Equipped with Rail Gun and medium armour. Fast and takes on most terrain.

Skirmish Tank -Missile launcher, mainstay weapon but can't tackle the steep slopes.

Triple Rail Hover Tank -The Big Boy of the good guys armour. Heavy armour, big guns but slow and can't tackle even the slightest of hills.

Tank Hunter -Emits an electrical discharge for close encounters, good for cornered opponents.

Phase Tank -Sneaky, can sit underground waiting to snare that well planned trap of yours. Lightly armoured, keep them in nice sized groups for that special "Surprise" welcome.



Rapid Armour Transport

Hellstorm Artillery -Long range, explosive cloud. Good armour, but needs support.

Rapid Armour Transport -Carries up to five men. When not moving, has a camouflage ability.

Flak Jak -Ground to air mobile missile launcher. Needs backup against ground attack.

Outrider -Flyer, effective air to ground missiles. Escort with the Sky Bike.

Sky Bike -Air to air attack, have a squadron handy for keeping the skies a safe place to fly.

Raider -Standard grunt infantry, but can phase. The look on your friend's face when 20 of these guys rise out of the mud...

Mercenary -Beefed up infantry, does the job.

Scout -Morph and keep morphing to get a scope on the battlefield.

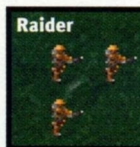
Field Medic/Mechanic -keep things healthy amongst your troops.

Martyr -Grunt with suicide bomb attached, yes it's going to hurt.

Shockwave -A huge underground earthquake that spreads to your enemy doing damage in it's path. Uses phase technology and very nasty indeed.



Spider bike



Raider



Mercenary



Scout

IMPERIUM UNITS

Scout Tank -Not as wimpy as it sounds. Fast and as with all Imperial tanks, utilizes Hover-craft technology.

Plasma Tank -The main tank of the Imperium, slowish but packs a punch. Only likes the flat terrain though.

Tachion Tank -The biggest and baddest. Can self destruct for extra misery.

Shredder -A large blade that slices through infantry, only the bad guys could use something like this.

Invader Troop Transport -Standard grunt carrier.

M.A.D. -Mobile air defense that shoots bladed projectiles at enemy flyers. Needs heavy ground support.

Cyclone -Master of the air, has both air to air and air to ground attacks. Limited ordinance requires constant re-arming.

Sky Fortress -Slow, floating bringer of destruction. Be afraid, very afraid...

Guardian -The basic grunt of the bad guys.

Bion -Cyborg killing machine. An army of Arnie's, that's got to be bad news.

Exterminator -Grunt with jet pack, fly over the mountains that the tanks can't cross.



Plasma tank



Guardian



Bion



Exterminator

MULTIPLAY

The talents behind Dark Reign realised that multi-player is of vital interest to real time combat lovers. After all, not many of us are still playing C&C or War2 against the computer are we?

First item on the agenda was making sure no nasty linear tactics crept into the game, ala the dreaded Tank Rush syndrome. This has been achieved by making different units suit specific environments. The clever use of subversive units like the Infiltrator are also beneficial. Rather than the fairly bland use of allies seen previously, teaming up with another player can offer some interesting situations. Giving money to that cash strapped partner can help bolster your second front. If you are feeling in a very charitable mood, you can donate some of your units on the battlefield to your partner's control. Just make sure you don't give him the really top notch gear, or maybe a backstab won't be too far away. All of the multi-player arenas are catered for. Modem, serial, Internet (up to 4 players) and the mighty LAN for that big junk food indulging 8

player shout fest. The need for transferring of information between machines has been kept to a minimum, so Internet play with more than two people should be a viable proposition. Looks like their won't be too many lonely Dark Reign players.

THE EDITOR

The Editor is a major part of Dark Reign, not some tacky last minute add on. Having full control of everything from terrain height right through to the brush shapes used in contouring the land, makes this an exercise in art at times. The Editor also allows placement of starting units and buildings in challenging positions. The trick here is to make maps that require clever use of units. If you exclude mountains and have a flat and featureless battlefield a boring tank rush could be the result. On the other hand the use of water, swamps and some mountains will result in scouting and an interesting skirmish requiring a variety of tactics and units. Mind you, my maps still look like somebody puked on the planet Bizzaro. Practice and playtesting and lots of it.



Expert a rush of net sites with new maps, courtesy of the editor

CUSTOM GAMING

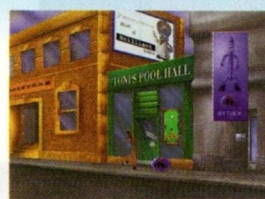
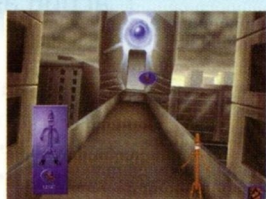
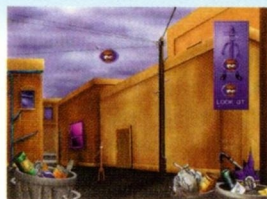
Maybe you crave to go that one further step than the game editor. Nestled in the Dark Reign install path is a folder called "Deftxt". Contained within this folder are nine important text files. Each one of these files sets up the parameters for units, buildings, terrain basically everything. By editing these files you can customize nearly every aspect of Dark Reign. If I wanted my normally ground based

Mercenary Soldier to have flying ability I simply open "Unit.txt" scroll down the list and replace "Ground" with the word "Flying" next to the Mercenary movement entry line. Things can get a lot more complex than that, but there is a key to all the variables at the top of each text file. One important word of caution, always make a backup before changing anything as some of these variables do very screwy things.

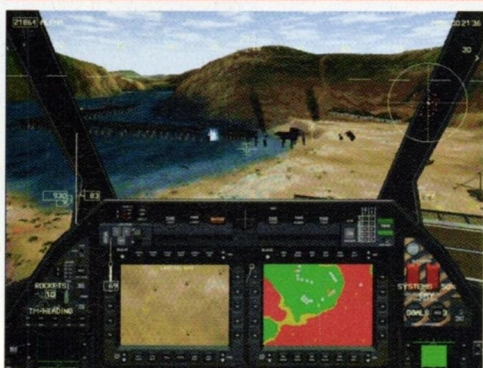
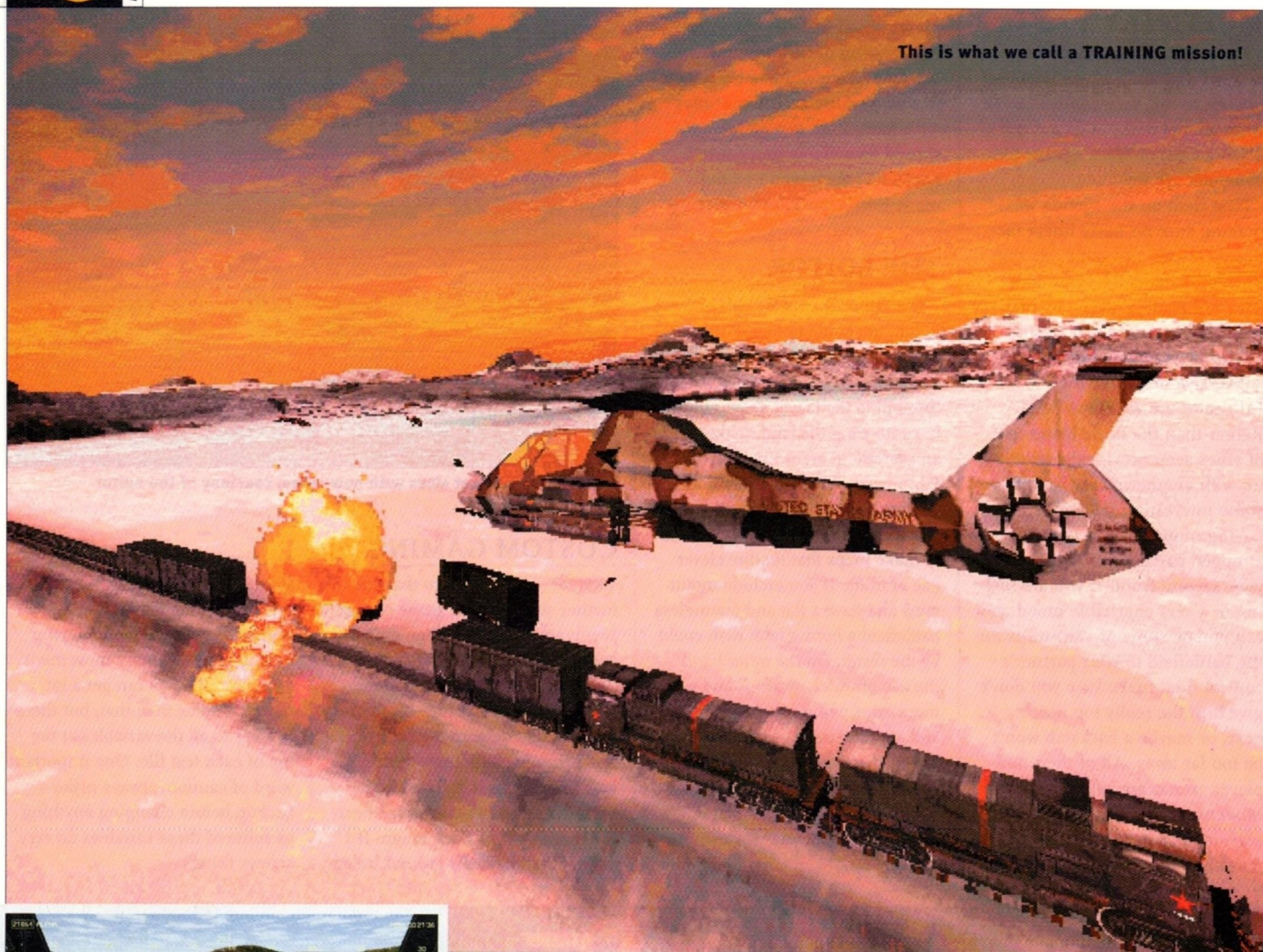


G. & V ADVANCE ELECTRONICS

presents



This is what we call a **TRAINING** mission!



Beautiful cockpit design. Practical & unobtrusive. Full-screen mode is available too

COMANCHE 3

Here it is. The almost-perfect blend of instant action and gratifying realism.

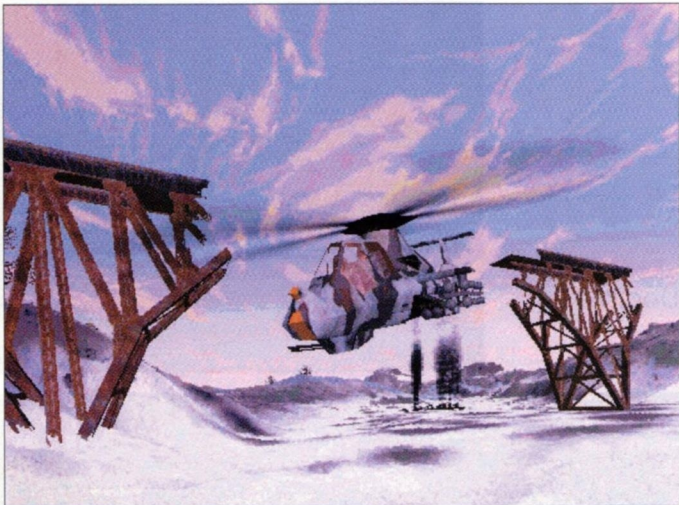
From the moment I first fired up this game, Dolby Surround Sound filled my ears. Let me tell you, I was impressed! Comanche 3 (C3) is a surprise indeed. Gone is the arcade game play, ridiculous missions and too simplistic flight model that we found in the two previous games. Instead, it is quite obvious that the design team actually did go and take a peek at a real Comanche, and they've obviously had some help from someone with a military mindset because the mission briefings now make sense. These advances are minor compared to the overall brilliant presentation of this game, its 3D graphics, surround sound and playability.

Real terrain

C3 is a DOS game that runs without a hitch in Win95. I noticed no degradation of frame rate in Win 95, and this is quite an achievement because it does not use DirectX drivers. The game's graphics engine is the Novalogic Voxel Space 2 three dimensional imaging system which produces detailed texture mapped terrain and objects with depth and striking realism. It's a terrific improvement on the previous graphics engine, and for my money it provides the most realistic low level scenery that I've seen to date in any flight simulation. Want real terrain features to mask behind? You've got them! Want many different types of trees and other vegetation...you've got them! Absolutely superb.



The Comanche's altitude is artificially limited



These are all gameplay shots. Impressive huh?

Communications is the fourth dimension to the modern battlefield and Novalogic have captured it beautifully in C3. "Griffin 23 you are cleared for departure", a "Roger" from your CP/G then off you go to experience a fair degree of battle-field sound realism. Throughout the

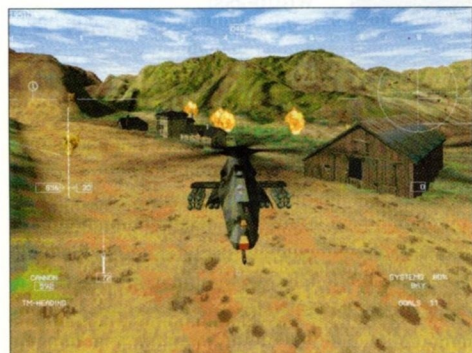


Another mission begins

flight you will hear the radio chatter of friendly pilots, and if another aircraft crosses your path, you will hear it cross left to right. Come up behind the armour you are supporting and hear the roar of their engines, and the crack and thump of weapons systems and artillery



Just explore & look...



Buddabuddabuddabudda...

fire missions. Sound support is well done, but does go a bit overboard when you can hear the birds chirping as you pass a tree.

But no choice of weapons!

Four Operations are available, totalling 32 missions in all. This enables game play in Siberia, Cuba, the Persian Gulf and the Black Sea area. Each Operation consists of eight missions, and each mission falls within the story line of the operation and is convincing in its task. During the briefing you will usually be given primary and secondary objectives, sometimes a FARP, and often you will find that you have a number of artillery Fire Missions and even a JSTARS allocated in support. The latter provides a "god like" view of the battlefield direct to your Threat Display via a data link from an AWACS type aircraft that can track and identify individual objects all the way to ground level. It was however, a bit disappointing to see no option to alter waypoints or weapons loadout.

Mission objectives include escorting trains, destruction of communications arrays, biochemical plants, oil rigs, submarine pens, patrol boats, and enemy air and ground attack assets. Often you will be tasked to cooperate with other

friendly forces on a mission such as "lase" a target or support an armoured thrust. Just wait until you call in a Fire Mission, "Roger 26, Fire Mission out" then feel the air vibrate as the shells strike the GPS coordinates you just "lased". Gameplay over an IPX Network is

exceptional because it permits up to nine players to act cooperatively on all 32 single player missions! What is more, you don't have to buy eight more copies of the game to do so; all you have to do is load the cooperative mode for operation without CD (109MB) on all stations and insert the CD in the master station and hey presto.. you're all in the same virtual world.

Well, as I said its a fun game. It's far from the old Comanche, but nowhere near the realism of Jane's

real thing, particularly if you are using rudders, throttle and stick. Watch out though, there is a bug in the throttle stick code, nudge it up a bit and nothing happens, then wang you're up to 120% torque and shooting skyward. It takes a bit of getting used too!

32 missions is limited for today's flight simulators, so I can feel a mission disk coming on. I hope they fix the throttle bug and provide many more missions.

Maj. Ian Lindgren



The scenario design is original & compelling

Longbow or DI's Apache. But not everyone likes to fiddle with multiple MFDs while adjusting radar azimuths and ranges, while selecting different sensors to get a lock on! C3 will lock on to any target with the tap of a key then allow you to destroy the target when in range.

It's truly amazing to see bits and pieces fall off targets as you hit them, and believe me, if you are too close you will be damaged by the debris. Hoverhold permits accurate NOE flying, and the Realistic Flight mode is close to the

80%


Category	Helicopter Flight Sim
Players	1-9
Publisher	EA/Novalogic
Price	\$79.95
Rating	TBA
Available	Now

For Brilliant graphics, surround sound, and multiplayer options combine to make this a fun sim.


Against Limited missions, no customisation of missions and no weapons loadout option are far from that which is expected in a modern flight sim.

Need P100 with 16 MB RAM

Want P166, 32 Mb RAM, AWE 32 Soundcard



<http://www.ea.com/ead/a/flabel.html>



REDNECK RAMPAGE

It was inevitable... Yes readers, here we have Funny Doom!



I had the opportunity to review the preview of RR, and it looked like great fun. Plenty of humour, the good 'ole Duke3D engine, lots of blood and some great totally unnecessary swearing and violence. My appetite was well and truly whetted, and when a full copy came into the office I quickly ripped off the shrink wrap and whacked the CD into the drive. 'This could be a biggie', I was thinking to myself as I installed the game. Hurry up and install, you bastard of a CD ROM - I wanna play now!

Captive audience

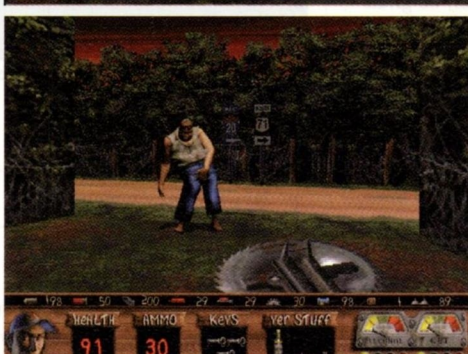
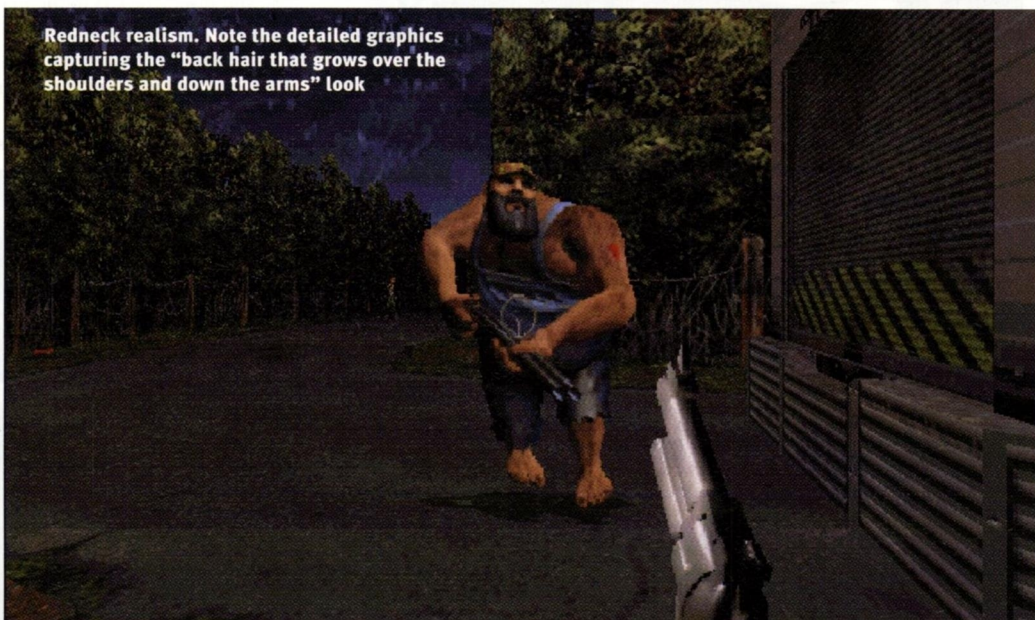
Then a most alarming incident took place - It's not that I can't see the point of an advertisement for another game after the installation is finished, in fact it's not a bad idea. However, immediately after the files had been copied across to my hard drive an ad for 'Star Trek - Academy' began. It looked quite pretty, so I watched it for a little while. However, not being a Star Trek fan, I quickly grew bored and pressed the escape key. Nothing happened, the ad kept running. So, thinking that maybe I missed the escape key I tried again, with the same result. Frantically I began hitting every key imaginable, and the mouse as well, with growing anger. The ad still ran. Thankfully it didn't run for that long, but still I was plenty annoyed that I couldn't choose whether to watch it or not.

Anyway, casting the whole unfortunate incident from my mind, it was time to run the game. Maybe it wasn't such a bad thing that the Trek ad ran before the game,



On a Friday night, this place is jumping

Redneck realism. Note the detailed graphics capturing the "back hair that grows over the shoulders and down the arms" look



Purty good Michael Jackson impression, fer a dangd zombie, that is

because I didn't want to start the game in a bad mood so I actually did the unthinkable - I read the manual before I played. Yes, it's true, and there goes what little credibility I had, but at least I can tell you what the story is. I promise to pray to the GameGod and take penance as soon as I've finished the review, ok? (3 hours of playing Trivial Pursuit with my family should be plenty, I reckon). So here's the story:

Bring on the aliens

It's all about Leonard (pronounced 'linnrd' and when possible you should spit whilst saying it for the full effect) and his quest to rescue his good friend Bubba from the alien invaders that have stolen

their prize pig, Bessie. Just why the aliens chose to steal Linnrd's porcine 'companion' isn't fully explained - perhaps it was the most intel-

ligent lifeform in the area. It's not just the pig that got took though, them dang basterd aleeuns took



Stick 'em up, baa lamb, yer comin home with me

that there skinny ole coot, Billy Ray Jeter, an' even Sheriff Hobbes and you can stick a can of spam up my ass and call me a hamburger if they didn't go ahead an clone 'em

too! Them aleeuns gone ahead and took near evryone else, and it was just up to me, linnrd, to save the whole damn town of Hickston and git rid of them unnatural bein's. I gotta admit, I was pretty dang pissed off seein' as I was related to most of the town, and no-one, not even aleeun assholes messes with ma family exceptin' other members of the family - if'n yer git my meaning...

Time to open up a can of whup-ass!

So, armed with his trusty .454 Casull pistol ('it'll blow a rabid dogs head clear right out of his ass', says Linnrd), Linnrd sets off to rescue his relatives and prize pig. Of course, during his travels (or more correctly, rampages) there's lot of other weapons to pick up just lying around the place in the pleasant way that weapons and ammo just lie around in these types of games. Next up is the double barrelled

shotgun - which fires either one or two shells at a time, depending on how long you hold the trigger down. If the shotty isn't enough there's always the ranch rifle - a fully automatic alien waster, but beware, it's got a bit of a kick to it, so leave your finger on the trigger too long and you'll be shootin' at nothing but the clouds in the sky. For those delicate matters though, a stick or two of dynamite will usually do the trick - be careful, once you've lit the wick make it's a good idea to throw it, otherwise you're going to end up splattered

of weapons too, like the alien guards with guns fixed on their arms. Luckily enough, once you've killed em dead-er'n'elvis you can rip off their arms and use the gun yerself. Sure you've gotta pull on the aliens tendon to fire, but it packs one hell of a punch! Then there's them alien wimmen-folk, they're mighty pretty but their breasts are more

than just pretty to look at - they shoot an awful lotta bullets awful fast. The key is to kill em somehow and then rip their breasts off and wear em yerself. Don't make you look very manly, but they come in pretty darn handy when you need lotsa bullets real fast. Last of yer opposition is them alien turd min-

ions. Seems every time one a' them aliens does a crap, their sheet gets up and comes to get yer. They jump about all over the place too, damn hard to get a bead on em and it don't sound too nice when you blow 'em up neither - sorta like what it sounds like when you eat too much of that green pepper chili, if'n you know what I mean...

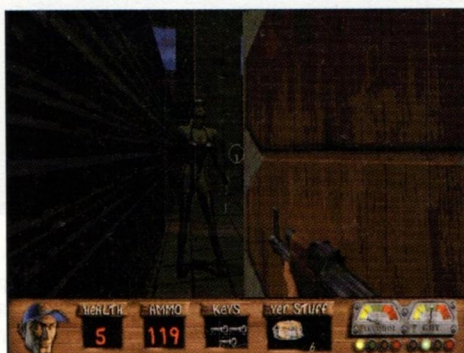
Speaking of food, yer gonna get a taste of some buckshot from the clones from time to time, so you might wanna chew on some deep fried pork balls or take a few chugs of some of the necessities in life; beer and whiskey. They make you fell a damnsite better, but you better be careful here too - taking a bit too much whiskey on an empty stomach can have some unpleasant side effects, like stumbling around and falling over.



The arm-of-dead-alien gun

The sensible bit

All up, it's not quite as good as I had at first hoped, but it's still a very decent game. Based on the Duke3D engine, the graphics do look more than a little dated, and though it will work with a mouse the game really doesn't like it much at all. The best thing about the game is the humour, undoubtedly. Truckloads of inbred one liners, and plenty of disgusting cartoon violence too. The pity of it is that even the humour can get a bit annoying at times - sheer repetition can get to you after a while, no matter how funny the content is. Mostly though, it's how dated



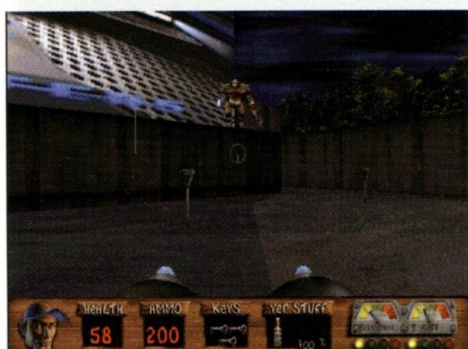
Alien dominatrix. Duke Nukem influences abound

the engine looks - I found it really hard to get into the feel of the game because of the look, and there's not really much more to say. The manual is funny, the game is funny for a while, but even though there is a different feel to the game, I couldn't escape the feeling that I'd done this kind of thing before (which I had). Having said that, I did have a damn fine time playing, and I will be going back for some more - multiplayer will be very cool indeed. I just don't think it'll be on my hard drive in a couple of months time, that's all.

Gareth Jones



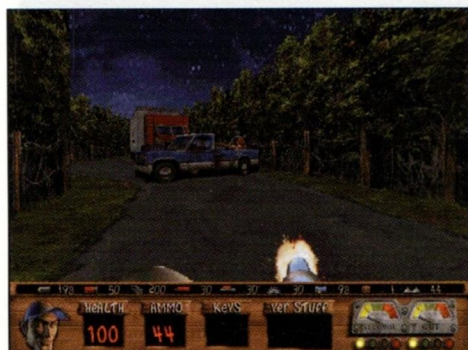
Texas buzz-saw massacre



The...ahh...umm...rapid fire brassiere gun. Oh dear...

all over the walls. Throwing the dynamite can get a bit tirin' after a while, and here's where your crossbow comes in pretty darn handy. Stick a bit of dynamite on to the arrows with some duct tape, and you're ready to send some pretty fireworks to the clones - real pretty when they go off inside their guts. As if that 'aint enough there's always the rip saw, it works mighty fine up close, and it's perfect for long distance mutilation too. Shoot off a few in close quarters and watch them rebound off the walls - mighty good fun.

It's not just the clones that you gotta deal with though, once you get a bit closer to their ship you gotta deal with the aliens themselves. And they've got some nasty mothers



Taking out the pickup and trailer home

Plus

www.interplay.com/red-neck/index.html for the 'cuss pack' which will add some even more offensive speech. Cool!



77%

Category	Inbred Duke3d clone
Players	1-6
Publisher	Interplay/EA
Price	\$89.95
Rating	MA15+
Available	Now

For Rootin', tootin', shootin' good time! Good variety of weaponry, well developed large and detailed levels. Drinking is encouraged, as is shooting the livestock.

Against Game engine looks dated, and there's nothing really all that new. Maybe not quite enough variety in the monsters.

Need P90, 16MB RAM, 2X CD.

Want P133, 32MB RAM

BLOOD

The Duke 3D engine's last hurrah is a meaty fest of gore and disgusting violence. It's not all good news though...



Heaps of violence, explosions and gore - all good points. Pity about the build engine though



Big guns filled with lots of napalm!

Blood's two main selling points are, I suppose, that it has licensed 3D Realms' Build engine (which, I'm sure you recall, was used to design Duke Nukem 3D) and that it is a revoltingly and, by turns, hilariously bloodthirsty game.

But are these really selling points? Let's take a look at the first one - the Build engine. Sure, you'll almost certainly see "Created with the Duke Nukem 3D Build engine!" or something similar in a prominent position on the box. I'm sure, too, that most people will think, "Yeah, Duke was a cool game, so this Blood must be worth checking out". I know I did, but then I thought about it some more. And then played the game, of course.

Competent functional

Duke was released over a year

ago (longer still if you count the shareware version) and, as we're all well aware, a year is an eternity in gaming. No matter how great it was, Duke is now an OLD game. Since then Bethesda have given us the XnGine-powered Terminator games, id have the superior Quake, Shiny have MDK, there's the brilliant shareware Chasm, and we've been seeing pics of Unreal, Prey and Jedi Knights for months now. Yet Monolith (the creators) expect us to be excited about Blood using Duke's Build engine. They're kidding, right? Build, now, is a competent, functional 3D engine - it's nothing special at all. By way of hammering this point home, I've just been informed that Duke Nukem Forever will be using the Quake engine.

Blood does feel very Duke Nukemey. Because of this, we find that the "mouse look" function

does not work all that well. As we noted in our preview in May, playing this way significantly slows the game down. You might see this as negating the distinct advantage mouse-players have over keyboard or joystick users in multiplay, but even then I'm sure you would

agree that it's a very odd way to go about doing that. What about when you want to play the solo game? You're stuck with either an inaccurate control or a slow control - it's a tough choice.

The other failing of the Build engine is that it's only pseudo-3D.



Taking out a rather large spider with your trusty Tommy gun



Hairspray + lighter = murder + mayhem

Monsters and objects are 2D, of course, but the buildings and general architecture aren't true 3D either. Everything appears to warp or skew when you look up and down, meaning that it's impossible to shoot things below or above even though it looks as if you should be able to.

Plenty of interaction

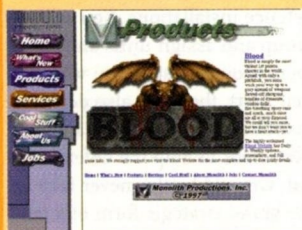
Monolith, however, have clearly learnt that one of the joys of Duke was the tremendous amount of things to do on each level. As such, Blood has plenty of interaction - giant holes can be blown in certain walls, there are hidden panels galore, there are eleven "secrets" on the first level alone. Particularly amusing is the sink full of blood at which you can say "Out! Out!



Quite pretty 2 1/2D scenery

Plus

<http://www.lith.com/home.asp>



Damn spot!" in your hammiest Shakespeare meets B-Grade horror film voice.

There's nothing astounding about the graphics. They're pretty on the higher resolutions (even 320x400 looks good and moves swiftly), the themes of graveyards, crypts, churches, spooky mansions, etc, are novel, and the level design is often clever (though equally often depressingly formulaic), yet at all times there's the unshakeable feeling that this game really is a year old.

So what about the second selling point - violence. Violence sells, it's a proven fact. And bloody violence sells bloody well. But I don't believe violence can sell a game on its own. There does need to be a quality game lurking beneath all the decaying flesh and mutilated limbs. For example, Quake sold and Witchaven did not.



Your average tesla gun

Spurting blood

Violence is what ever-so-nearly saves Blood. I reckon it is easily the most disgusting game I have ever played. You begin the game armed solely with a pitchfork. A zombie rises from its grave and lurches remarkably quickly in your direction. When it gets close enough you thrust your farming implement into its midriff and watch it topple over backwards, blood spurting from the wounds. After a couple of seconds it rises again, so you repeat your attack, cleaving the creature's head from its undead shoulders. Dead for good this time,



Ye olde faithful shotgun. Not much to shoot here though

it falls to the ground and a fountain of blood sprays all over the surrounding muddy dirt. You walk forward a few steps and kick the head across the graveyard just to make sure of your kill. Apparently, in a multiplayer game, you should be able to organise a game of football - with a head such as this one as the ball.

Killing the machine gun wielding monks with the flare gun causes them to burst into flames, run around screaming in agony for a while, before (quite literally this time) bursting into hundreds of tiny pieces of well-cooked flesh. The TNT results in some delicious explosions and often blood-soaked rooms. And the

voodoo doll? A-ha-ha-ha! It's a beauty.

Yet the novelty wears off after a day or two, and ultimately what I wanted was a damn good game to get my teeth stuck into. Unfortunately, Blood doesn't deliver. They haven't quite gone far enough, so I feel like I've seen it all before. It feels antiquated.

I realise that Blood isn't a bad game. It is, in fact, pretty good and can be severely entertaining. But there are just so many better games out there already and with plenty more still to come, it's difficult to really recommend this as an

essential purchase. If Blood had been released back when we started to hear about it, with the promise of gratuity upon gratuity, needless violence in excess volumes, it might have gone down as a classic 3D shoot 'em up. It wasn't, so it isn't.

David Wildgoose

71%

Category	Action
Players	1-8
Publisher	GT/Roadshow
Price	\$89.95
Rating	M15
Available	Now

For Original weapons. Plenty of Duke-style interaction and humour. Not for the faint-hearted.

Against Little more than a second-rate Doom clone with loads of gore. Feels old.

Need P75, 16Mb RAM, 4xCD

Want P166+, A fast video card

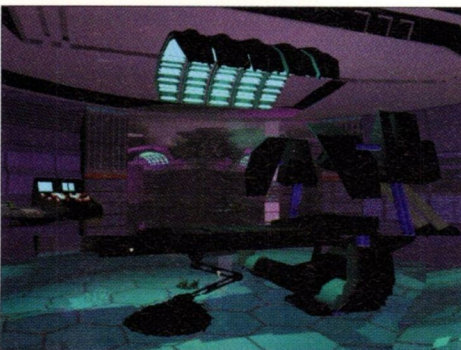
IMPERIUM GALACTICA

Wow. A new game concept. Here we have the old reliable resource management, empire building, scientific advancement and diplomacy sci-fi strategy game - set in an Adventure game way!



A strategy game where you spend the whole time in the command room of a spaceship

Just when you thought the universe had been conquered more times than any sane person could stand "who's invading this week Gladys?" "Oooh, I think it's the Gonads, Marge. I hear they're very efficient breeders dear. Very efficient." GT Interactive whips out a surprise package, a new space strategy epic to rival the best, or just another spreadsheet disguised as a game?



The virtual starship can be explored in a very limited 1st person view

Progress through promotion

Imperium Galactica is an unusual combination of classic Space Opera, FMV adventure and mission based strategy game. The game starts out allowing you access to only a few of its management screens, limiting the amount of control you have over the resources at your disposal. No building, researching or invading is allowed! In this stage of the game you are given missions to complete and if you do well a promotion will follow, giving you more control over your forces and your destiny. Eventually you are given full control of the war effort (at Grand Admiral rank) allowing you to use diplomacy and force of arms to rebuild the Human empire. Planetary



Ice worlds have only limited room for development

researched before they can be used. These structures perform the usual functions of feeding, housing and protecting your colonies inhabitants and they need power to work properly. Power sta-



The artists have clearly enjoyed themselves

and space action in Imperium are represented equally, in other words there is a lot more emphasis on ground based combat than there is in most other games of this type. Planetary action takes place on terrain maps which vary depending on the type of world, ice, desert etc. They are a bit small though and considering the quality of the real-time combat engine used in the game it seems a waste to have to slug it out in such a confined area.

Real-time ground combat

There are a wide variety of building types in Imperium, of course some of them need to be

tions are important, not only because they help with the aforementioned problem, but because they also form the focal point of nearly all assaults on your colonies. Ground-based combat takes place when you or your enemies attack a planet and defeat its defence installations. You can group and assign units and order them around just as you would in Red Alert, there are also defensive installations such as Barracks and Fortresses to help the defenders out. Ground battles never take on the grand strategic form of a true



The gameplay is constantly peppered with stunning cut scenes to compliment the storyline



Ready for ground combat

real-time strategy game though because of the small size of the terrain map (basically one screen, at least there's no need to scroll!). Ground combat is much more important than space shenanigans early in the game as it is much easier to defend a planet on the

surface when the alien fleets are far superior. In fact it's wise not to build any planetary defences, as they just waste time and money.....build lots of barracks and tanks instead.

Research for fun and profit

As is usual with these sorts of games your technology gradually increases with time and study (well, you have to achieve the rank of Commander before you can do any research, but it builds after that!). The level of research you can do depends on the number of particular buildings

you have at your disposal. There are A.I. buildings, Civil Engineering, Mechanical, Computer etc. but only one can be built per planet. What this means is that, to keep your tech. momentum going, you have to keep conquering or colonising new planets or suffer from falling too far behind your enemies. Now what do you do with technology besides build bigger and better plasma blaster thingies? And what better use for a plasma blaster thingy than to blast an alien's spaceship to bits and tattoo your name on his butt.

Imperium Galactica handles space combat in a similar way to the original MOO with a top down 2D display. This does get rather annoying though when your fleet gets tangled up with itself trying to obey your orders. Making ships manoeuvre around each other in two dimensions is stupid when, in reality, they would also be able to go above or below each other. There is another dumb limitation, your ships cannot fire and move at the same time! Therefore it's far better to let your opponent come to you and face a barrage of fire from your fleet than to charge at them, as you'll get creamed. This takes a bit of the fun out of the space combat side of things, for me anyway. Ironically though, the main problem with Imperium is also one of its' most interesting features! Having a story to go

along with the conquest is fine, but the game plays exactly the same way every time, exactly the same! Therefore you have to accept this fact if you're going to enjoy the game but, compared with the fantastic replayability of MOO2, it may be over too early for some of you.

George Soropos



Combat is implemented poorly, and is a risky affair

Plus

<http://www.gtinteractive.com/minisite/ig/>



80%

Category	Space Strategy
Players	1
Publisher	GT Interactive
Price	\$89.95
Rating	TBA
Available	Now

For Innovative gameplay which will capture the interest of even jaded space strategy veterans.

Against Ground maps are too small for real strategic warfare, lack of replayability may be a problem for some.

Need 486 DX100, 8Mb RAM, DOS 5.0, 4X CD

Want P100, 8X CD

STAR COMMAND REVOLUTION

If you're a C&C fan, like space games and have been lusting after a game that combines the best of both, your wait is over.



Units look nice, but there isn't enough variety. Still, the advanced research options compensate

Star Command Revolution is, to be utterly and deliberately unimaginative, a 'revolution' in the real-time strategic conquest gaming market. Well, to be honest, it's not that amazingly spectacular but it is a C&C clone and it is set



Space, yet another frontier

in space. And in my book, that must be good.

As you'd expect SCR revolves around real time resource production, management and unit movement. Oh, and there's the fun invade-and-massacre-your-neighbour routine bit as well, but initially you have to put that aside and concentrate on building up a base of operations. You build buildings, buildings build ships and ships kill things. Nice and simple.

You can build various classes of ships, droids and immobile defences. Unlike C&C though, the damage your units inflict can affect a variety of systems on enemy

units such as their engines (thus reducing their speed), their technology (thus reducing their damage and rate of fire) and so on. You can also build units to repair these same areas for your own units. All up this means conflict in SCR takes on a more thoughtful twist with extra planning involved when it comes to production and combat. If you're not into all that thinking stuff, you might find SCR a little too complex.

More is good

The game boasts a rather large 64 different controllable unit types, but these are divided between the

four races of the Terrans, the Triumverites, the Nomads and the Computrons and, more importantly, a large portion of the 'unit' types are structures. When it comes down to warring with another player, SCR is thankfully very much like C&C in the number and diversity of units in command.

As you would expect each race has different abilities. Generally races either concentrate on doing shield or technology damage with a few extra units dedicated to targeting other areas such as 'control' (meaning, if an enemy craft has its control reduced to 0 it becomes captured). Each race also has



The level of detail in SCR is quite impressive, pity the viewing area soaks up so much screen real estate.



Minerals aplenty! Harvesting, however, is a slow and dangerous process.

unique ships that can't be found elsewhere, such as huge teleporting gun platforms, this is always a fun toy! Think of it like an obelisk which you can teleport anywhere you see (after saving energy for a

while). Quite a surprise to dump one in your enemies base.

There are a few neat twists with SCR mothership. Think of it as a roving MCV — it moves around and builds structures, but it also harvests minerals for production. It's also the only one you get, lose it and you can build no more. Fear not for motherships, while not equipped with any weaponry, are as tough as a rhino's rear and take a heck of a beating before giving up their jewels of stored minerals.

Artificial intelligence

Units can learn and earn experience. Stick 'em next to a university structure and after a while they'll increase in ability up to a limit. Send them out to fight and if they survive they can increase beyond

this limit and even earn special abilities. Neat. Techs aren't limited to what your race can build either, if you leave your mothership next to a university long enough it'll start learning the techs of one other race in the universe. Imagine playing the Russians and the English at the same time in Red Alert, being able to build structures and units from each. Neat again.

You can jump into single player games, multiplayer games over a network and the Internet and take part in co-op or deathmatch campaigns — a game doesn't have to be completed in one sitting, you can play and compete over a number of 'maps'. More neatness.

And it's even in high-res 640x480! What more could you ask for?

However SCR isn't all lollies and neatness. For all of these features it has to be said that there's a slight dose of information overload in SCR, both in the form of colourful highly detailed graphics and in the gameplay.

The attention to detail on the unit types and surrounding galaxy seems to water down the easily discernable boundaries between the different unit types, especially in the heat of battle. It's a minor winge, but it is something you pick up. Similarly the gameplay is a little too complex than it needs to be. It's nice to be able to build units to target engines or technology and it's quite cool to build up groups of

task-oriented units, but when the heat of battle strikes and you're desperately pumping out new units all this goes out the window and you just build default grunts to get the job done. In other words, SCR offers the opportunity for strategic gameplay right from the steps of your production facility but it's unlikely you'll ever delve deep into this foray and instead just build those units you need to do some sheer pounding damage.

Overall it's definitely a neat game. If the C&C genre hasn't worn off you yet and you're looking for new territories to conquer, look to the stars with SCR.

Ashton Mills

80%

Category	Real time strategy
Players	1-4
Publisher	GT Interactive
Price	£TBA
Rating	G
Available	Now

For It's a shameless attempt at C&C in space. And it does it rather well. Plenty of diversity, unit types and playability as well as a few nice twists to your average real-time strategy game.

Against A little too much attention to detail, viewing area isn't quite as large as you'd hope. It may be a C&C clone, but don't expect the same gameplay. SCR is quite different in respect to its deeper strategy involvement.

Need P60, 16Mb RAM, 2xCD, DOS 5+

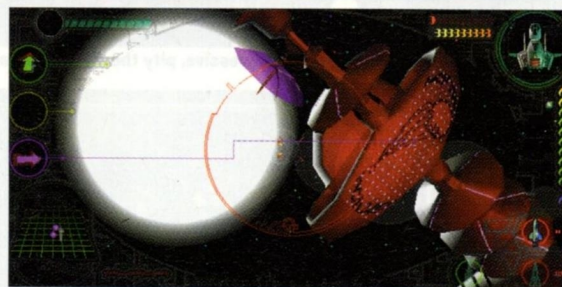
Want P90, 4xCD, strategically inclined friends

Plus

<http://www.gtinteractive.com/minisite/star/>



DARKLIGHT CONFLICT



Very pretty, great mission design and enough to keep you at it for ages.

Maybe it's some sort of subliminal hold over us by George Lucas, or more probably, it's that blasting away in the 3D realm of deep space is a very satisfying pastime. Whatever the reason, the X-Wing and Wing Commander series have become an institution on hard drives around the globe. Moments such as facing off against an Imperial Star Destroyer in your battered old X-Wing, whilst dodging Tie Interceptors on your six... definition of near perfect gaming. With the Wing Commander series still a favourite with Space Opera fans, and X-Wing Vs Tie Fighter set to take over our lives, it's easy to overlook a new entry into the arena such as Darklight Conflict.

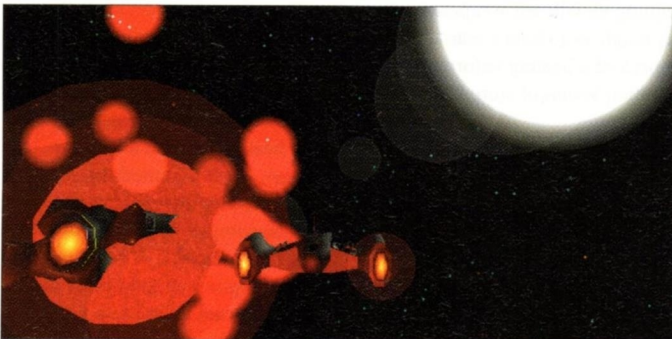
The Last Starfighter

Unlike the elaborate story in Wing Commander, Darklight Conflict takes a more simple premise. Showing off your dog-fighting skills as a US Naval Pilot, you gain the attention of the Reptons. A rather desperate race of aliens who are losing the war with

their arch enemies, the Ovons. Before you can say, "Where's Scully and Mulder when I need them" you are whisked away as the latest recruit in their space fighter squadron. The only reminder of a plot within the game is some text in between missions, telling you how the war is proceeding. The lack of glitzy cutscenes is made up for by the large amount of missions (fifty!) on offer.

Jumping into the cockpit for the first time immediately raises a smile, the graphics are superb in every respect. Light-sourcing from weapons, explosions and nearby stars presents everything in an eerie glow that really gives

Darklight Conflict a uniquely surreal style. The spacecraft are all decked out in sleek metallic texturing, giving an ominous look whilst they glide through space. Special effects such as the brilliant explosions and passing through Warp gates will have you in "Computer show-off" mode to all your mates. Thankfully performance is very acceptable on a P133, with only occasional slowdown in some areas like asteroid fields. Those with lower spec Pentiums can adjust the detail down, and there is a VGA mode for the brave amongst you. I say brave as the VGA mode on offer here looks tacky and is to be avoided if possible.

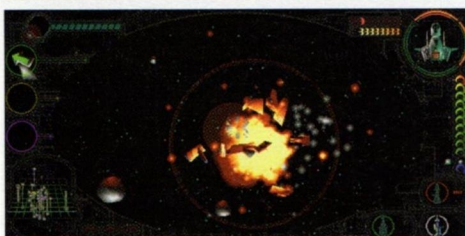
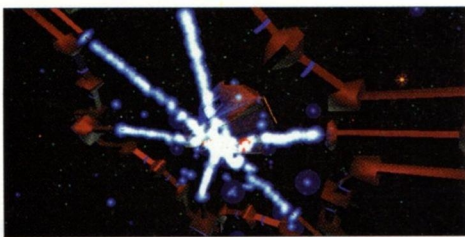


High speed ramming

The cynical, hard edged, jaded gamer in me was sure something would be horribly wrong once the dogfighting occurred. All show no go, we've all been there before. Launching into the training missions introduced all the weapon types and things



Bloody pretty.



Pretty explosions are an essential thing...

were looking quite promising. Tractor Beams, differing missile types and a supermarket of beam weapons. Once past the training scenarios the war begins, and the cynical bastard in me was

volley of shots and then cutting power and pulling away. You'll quickly develop various dog fighting tactics and each mission will require a different approach. No repetitive blundering full speed at the enemy here, all guns blazing (well only sometimes). One initial frustration is the

Ovon's nasty habit of ramming your ship at high speeds, which calls for the mastering of high turns and speed adjustments early on in your campaign.

Space is rarely a dull place in

ing. Protecting cargo ships that are made of a new metal similar in strength to wet cardboard, and blown up by the enemy just looking at them will bring back memories of those overly difficult missions from X-Wing. The real clunker missions involve you ditching your highly mobile ship and taking control of a stationary turret that has limited turning ability. These missions are a frustrating duckshoot, that would have been better left out of the game. Apart from these irritations, the missions are on the whole good stuff.



The H.U.D goes for style points over practicality

idea of combating with a friend.

While Darklight Conflict is a lot of fun to play, it misses out on taking Tie Fighter's crown. This is not due to any gameplay faults, more because it lacks the depth of Lucasart's masterpiece. Shields operation is a simplistic button press and there is minimal onboard power management. The locking of targets is all automatic with no control of radar target selection. Sure it's more of an arcade experience than sim, but it excels in adrenaline rushing. If you even remotely like space combat, Darklight Conflict is an extremely worthy purchase.

Peter Sharpe



Good object light-sourcing has been achieved without over-taxing the 3D engine

quickly silenced. Smooth responsive controls and flight dynamics that remind heavily of Tie Fighter (in other words excellent) all add up to the feeling of "being there". Spotting enemy ships on radar can have you flying in from various angles into enemy squadrons, unleashing a

Darklight Conflict. The missions have you undertaking various tasks from intercepting enemy command ships, mining asteroid fields and the highly recommended "Comet Chase". The Ovens have cleverly attached engines to some rogue comets and are guiding them towards your command ship. You must track them down, intercept and then destroy the guidance units on each one... all while avoiding the tail of the comet. It looks brilliant and is one of the most enjoyable missions I've played in a space sim. On a darker note (enter the jaded gamer) some of the missions are best described as annoy-

2 CDs for multiplay

The joy of gaming in the 90's is multi-player and Darklight Conflict gets halfway there. Network play for up to six space cowboys is supported but unusually for some reason modern play is absent. This will make the game a solo experience for most people. EA have stated that a modem patch is on the way, so we modem devotees will just have to be patient. At least EA included two CD-ROM's so as to warm us to the



Don't forget the asteroid field

89%

Category	Space Shooter
Players	1-6
Publisher	Electronic Arts
Price	\$89.95
Rating	G
Available	Now

For Great atmosphere due to tremendous graphics and sound effects to match. Space combat that aims for excitement and delivers.

Against Some of the missions are a chore. Simplified damage and control model could lead to Tie Fighter withdrawal.

Need P60 (VGA Graphics), 16Mb RAM, DOS 6.22,

Want P133 (SVGA Graphics Mmmm), 16Mb RAM, sturdy joystick

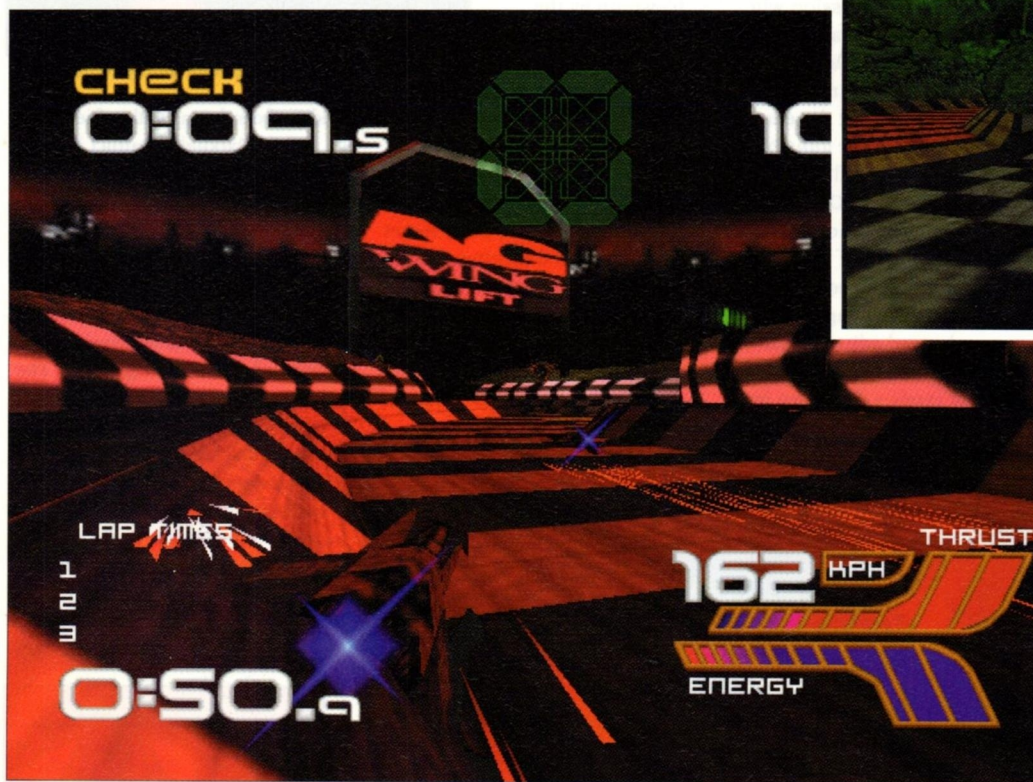
Plus

www.ea.com -
Big company, big Webpage.



WIPEOUT 2097

From PlayStation to PC comes Wipeout 2097. 3D support too! So why all the long faces?



Wipeout 2097's pit stops are probably the most impressive you'll ever see.

+ Plus

Rendition

All effects as good as the 3Dfx. Transparency, bilinear filtering etc. But, considerably slower. It jerks in places it shouldn't

3Dfx

Full use of bilinear filtering, transparency (don't forget to turn up the gamma though!) and awesome speed, though still not as fast as the Playstation. Actually, Pod with native 3Dfx code is a better choice.

Wipeout 2097 is the latest title from Psygnosis. A very pedantic bunch, these Super Human, been around since Noah was a boy, programming God geniuses have high ideals and visions for their software which means that they tend to only write for the best platform. Which until recently was the Sony Playstation, where Wipeout 2097 was a big hit and an amazing experience that pushed the console to its' limits.

Taking these high ideals into consideration, Wipeout 2097 for the PC has been programmed using the Direct 3D set of APIs to

ensure that 3D accelerators will all be able to do their stuff and bring justice to the game. Wipeout 2097 is one of the most visually enhanced games around and needs some _serious_ hardware to play it. If you've got it, smile smugly now!

Weapons and power-ups

Wipeout 2097 is essentially a racing game. A futuristic racing game at that. You're a pilot/driver (whatever) of the latest human invention, being anti gravity vehicles of which you can choose from 4 different designs, each with their own special characteristics. Just like any other racing game, you



The craft's exhaust are nice, but aren't a patch on the Playstation's vapour trails.

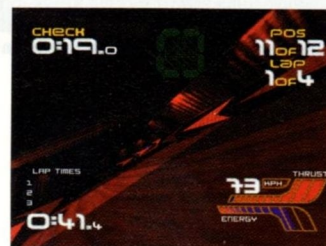


The starting grid on the Brazilian jungle/Inca temple track.

nel, flame and the inertial impact that is hitting a stationary object at high speeds.

Wipeout 2097 tracks are designed to be very fast, yet have serious corners to contend with - some almost at right angles and there are many U bends. Scattered outside of every corner are boosters, when you pass over them they speed you up significantly.

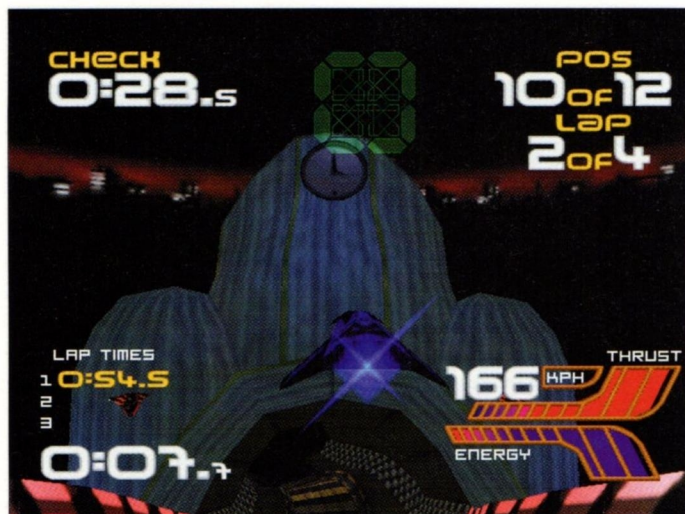
Corners need to be tackled with absolute precision, and although this maybe frustrating to some or even many, mastering the skill is very rewarding. It is actually much easier with an analogue joystick,



The in-car view can be vomit-inducing.

and hitting speed-up after speed-up from successfully cornering gives a delightful sense of achievement with a hit of adrenaline as well.

Also along the tracks are the mentioned weapon power-ups. Passing over the relevant symbol allows you to pick up guided missiles, mines, a temporary shield (that doesn't stop you from slowing down when you hit a wall), electro blasts, autopilot and the awesome shock-wave that lifts the track up ahead causing all sorts of destructive mayhem to competitors in front.



The background detail is incredible, but you're going too fast to see it.

PC vs. Consoles... Again.

So far Wipeout 2097 seems like a pretty damned good game if you've got the hardware, and it is. BUT, it's time to bitch at Psygnosis. Yes, this *_IS_* PC PowerPlay, but a lot of us have consoles as well and it's only right

to compare. The first thing, though only a nitpick, is that the opening video is ghastly compared to the Playstation one. Utilising the absolutely hated interlaced technique, the colour is all washed out and not worth watching. The Playstation one however, you could

watch endlessly. The CD tracks offered on the Playstation version are also different to the PC. Where the Playstation got all the glitzy artists such as Future Sound of London, Chemical Bros. And Prodigy. The PC version has only the tracks from Psygnosis's in-house Music Studio Cold



But where the hell is the battleship?



A missile hit on any game is an immensely satisfying experience, especially when it looks like this.

Storage. This is a good thing though, Messij xtnd. is perfect for ultra high speed tracks and besides, Tim Wright is damn good.

On the graphical side though, the PC version of Wipeout 2097 is in 640 x 480. The difference is amazing. The vehicles are much more defined and detailed, and the track just infinitely sexier than on the Playstation. To counter that though (maybe after some kind of conspiratorial deal with Sony) is that the vehicles don't have the long and sexy jet exhaust like on the Playstation. It may seem like a little thing, but zooming through a tunnel on the Playstation, with a long sleek jet stream ahead of you and someone passing from the side was fantastic. All we get on the PC version is a pathetic little transparent texture in the form of a blue gleam.

Now Psygnosis, don't think for a second you can tell us that it can't be done. Ubisoft's Pod features brilliantly transparent gourauded streams just like in Wipeout 2097 on the Playstation. If it's a limitation of Direct 3D, then make specialised versions. Ok, a bit harsh, but you did for F1! It is a significant let down. Where the Playstation version of Wipeout

2097 was bright with deep rich colours in the tunnel. On the PC everything seems dull and washed out. Initially on the 3Dfx it was like driving through volcanic ash, but adjusting the gamma high enough to give you a tan helped a lot.

Overall, Wipeout 2097 is an excellent game. If you don't have a Sony Playstation, and couldn't care less about them, yet DO have a 3D accelerator then get Wipeout 2097. If you do have a Playstation though, don't get the PC version, it's not as good.

Jere Lawrence

75%

Category	3D racing sim
Players	1
Publisher	Psygnosis
Price	\$TBA
Rating	G
Available	Now

For Fun fast gameplay. The speed and difficulty makes it very addictive. Tracks are all delightfully different with excellent themes. Little extras such as cameras and moving mono-rails create a nice atmosphere.

Against This would have been a 90%+ score, but the power of 3D accelerators has been overlooked. For a toy to have better effects considering the power of our machines is a slap in our faces!

Need 486/DX66, 8 Mb RAM, 2 x CD

Want 486, 8Mb RAM, 4 X CD

CALLAHAN'S CROSSTIME SALOON

Save the universe while simultaneously enjoying a beer at the pub - we can manage that...

For most of us, going down to the local Pub would not be considered an event of cosmic significance. A few games of pool, some stale peanuts and a few friendly beverages with your mates seems to be the order of the day. Of course the Vampires, aliens, time travellers and Gods of our reality also want a place to unwind and have a friendly beer. Thus we have Callahan's Crosstime Saloon, a definite mix of Universal quirkiness plus some friendly atmosphere all rolled into a place that is one of the more interesting settings for an adventure game. Not that all the patrons of Callahans originate from the Outer Realms,



Every character has a rich story

and that's where you come in. Jake Stonebender, folk Singer and general salt of the earth sort of guy. The tragic loss of your family in an accident left you with a gaping hole in your life. Consequently your friend Doc Webster introduced you to Callahans, as it seems to be a place for gaining some wider perspectives on the experiences of life. While everybody comes from different walks of life, dimensions and even states of death, the one unwritten rule in this pub revolves around everyone just getting on well. Of course, if the universe is about to be foreclosed on by the Gods, it seems inevitable that an average guy like yourself in a very non-average place like Callahans is going to get involved.

Proper puzzles

While having a setting that is the Twilight Zone meets Cheers, Callahans uses a more familiar adventure game format. The main viewing area has you chatting with characters, moving inventory items

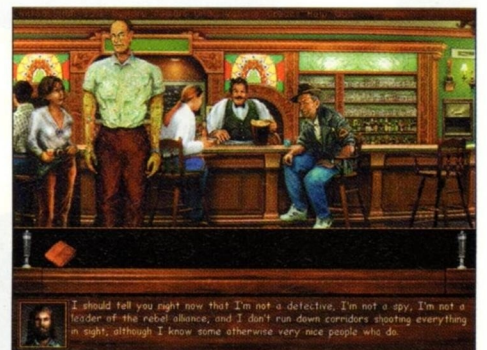


Your new friends. Attractive lot aren't they!

around and generally mouse clicking in the usual adventure tradition. All of the locations, whilst being cartoony in style, are well drawn and generally pleasing to the eye. One welcome break with gaming tradition is the addition of quality voice acting for the main characters. Too many times in the past have adventure games atmosphere been broken by the game company's accountant doing the voice over work. While all looking nice and dandy Callahan's strongpoint is not in any new "pushing of the envelope" in adventure game format or technology. Original Characters and a great atmosphere consisting of comedy mixed in with cosmic significance is the order of the day here.

Whilst hanging out in a bar filled with cosmic beer drinkers is probably a past time in itself, the spirit of adven-

turing will soon have you out and about in various exotic locations. Jake seems to be a friendly sort of chap and helping out his friends in need is the central point of the six quests you will undertake. The producers of Callahans have cleverly given each of these self contained stories their own individual flavours. For example, Adventures of a Lovesick Vampire will have you trapesing around a Transylvanian town searching for (hard to find) ingredients so as to lift a curse on the romantic partner of a friendly vampire. In contrast, A Real



Go to a place where everyone knows your name.

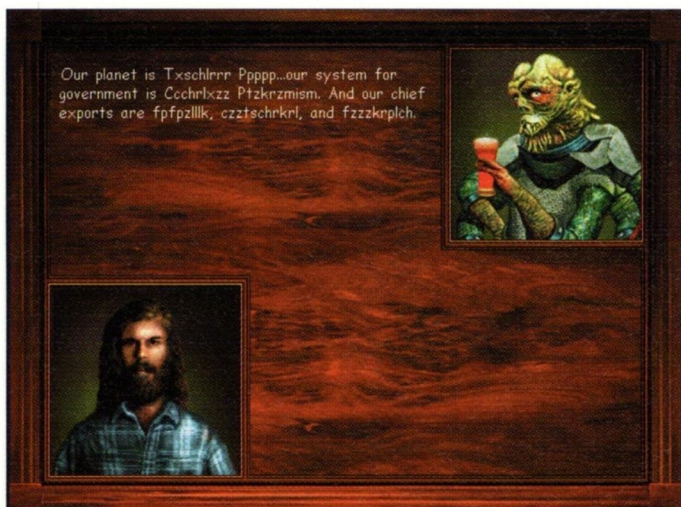
+ Plus

www.legendent.com

Callahans is based on a series of books written by Spider Robinson. Check out the Newsgroup alt.callahans to join the cult following of these series of stories. They seem a friendly bunch of people.

Callahan's
CROSSTIME SALOON
Now Available

"I should tell you right now that I'm not a detective, I'm not a spy, I'm not a leader of the rebel alliance, and I don't run down corridors shooting everything in sight, although I know some otherwise very nice people who do."



This is your character - the ugly one with the beard.

Man's Dilemma involves manipulating the technical facilities on an alien space station, more puzzle solving than object hunting. While both these storylines might sound original, how about accompanying a time travelling cop on her quest involving the saving of a rare chocolate plant in Brazil! On solving each story chapter, a visit back to Callahans is usually on the agenda, with the ultimate aim of saving the universe, but not before playing some Pub trivia games and generally having some fun just chatting to weird characters just for the reason of having a good chuckle.



It's funny too!

It's a tough call bringing comedy to games, with the risk of cringing replacing the intended laughs. The comedy on offer here is best described as clever one liners meets mild American flavoured Monty Python. Yep it's not off the wall, roll around on the floor laughter material, but it's cleverly written and kept a permanent grin on my face. Trying to perk up a drunk suicidal Vampire or dressing up as an alien courtesy of a pine tree air freshener, well it's comedy that has a rewarding twist over your mid week TV sitcom.

Nosing about in this odd version of reality might be fun, but it can be

very difficult as well. Some of the puzzles are comedy related and thus pretty obscure and often not logical. Being part of the "I want to enjoy a game without being stuck in one place for two weeks" crowd, I was mightily impressed that the hint book is included with the game. Containing general hints, a guide to the funny red herrings and a comprehensive walk-through it's very useful as a frustration saver. I have a feeling that the makers realised that this is a pretty tough game, and wanted people to have the option of enjoying the atmosphere without getting bogged down in "fetch the hidden item".

Callahan's Crosstime Saloon is the sort of game you play when wanting a change from blazing shotguns, saving Earth from a dark fate and general action fests. I found playing the game with a nice cup of coffee relaxing and generally enjoying the laid back attitude of the game made for a good evening. Besides we here at PowerPlay generally like the concept of saving the universe whilst enjoying a good Ale in a Pub.

Peter Sharpe



A rare excursion from the bar



"So I'm lining my shot up, right, an' this guy bumps my arm and the cue goes right through the felt! So I killed 'im."

80%

Category	Adventure
Players	1
Publisher	Legend Entertainment
Price	\$89.95
Rating	MA15+
Available	Now

For Original storyline is entertaining and rarely gets predictable. It's big and will take a while to complete (without constant use of the walkthrough). The different missions will take you to very diverse range of places.

Against Due to the very conventional point and click 2D interface the game is not as immersive and looks dated next to titles like Pandora Directive. Don't lose the hint book, some of the puzzles are overly obscure.

Need 486/DX66, 8 Mb RAM, 2 x CD

Want 486, 8Mb RAM, 4 X CD

Dodgy graphics betray a very advanced game engine. All this cleverness lies beneath the surface in the form of advanced A.I.

But I assure you, the heightened security is necessary...



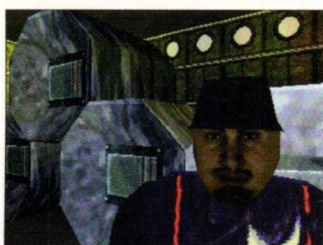
Talk with anyone, interact with anything



SENTIENT

A little leap forward in adventure gaming has been achieved with Sentient.

Placing a space station in close orbit around a sun probably seemed a good idea at the time. Besides nothing could possibly go wrong parking a man made object next to an uncontrollable furnace equivalent to the force of 50



Pushing visual frontiers...backwards

million Nukes. All was going well, until crew members started coming down with that strange radiation sickness, and then of course was the rumour of mutiny by certain sections of the station's personnel. Lastly, there was the minor problem of the station slowly and rather uncontrollably losing orbit and heading towards a very fiery end. As medical technician Garrit Sherova you were on route to Icarus Spacestation and going against the station's usual good fortune a Sun Flare hit your shuttle sending you crash landing into the station's docking bay. I had a feeling this was going to be one tough adventure...

Real AI

Sentient's exotic location is matched by what's best described as exotic visuals. Textured Polygons and very strange colour schemes make up most of the

environment. The characters are similarly given the 3D Polygon treatment looking like relatives from Virtual Fighter. The choice of playing in a tiny Win 95 window will give you better resolution, but venturing into full screen things look decidedly blocky. The final result is a garish look that is rough around the edges, but suitably enough "Outpost in deep space" to convey some atmosphere. 3D graphics, menacing Sci-Fi storyline and time to go into adventure problem solving mode. So far pretty standard fare. What soon becomes an eye-brow raiser is the totally open behaviour of the crew. Walking around the various locations crewmen can be seen undertaking their duties, roaming about the corridors and even chatting with each other. You are quite free

to interrupt a person's activities ask them questions, gain opinions and generally play the role of investigator. This high level of interac-

+ Plus

www.psygnosis.com -The bringer of good news says that Direct 3D is supported through Rendition and Matrox Mystique Video cards.



tion really hits home when you walk up to somebody and ask them for the whereabouts of a person, the result being an escort to the required destination. A credit to the programmers is the way in which character's behaviour and certain plot outcomes are different from game to game. Not helping an injured crew member in one game had me unpopular from the start, next game I played the Good Samaritan and was welcomed by previously aggressive individuals. Dare I say replay value in an adventure game?

Those little touches...

After being initially impressed with interactions with the crew, Sentient started to become a chore to play. While the characters will answer your questions in a variety of ways, they rarely escape the mold of a boring question and answer drone. Even differing facial expressions don't liven up the proceedings. A Home and Away episode will seem Shakespearean compared to the conversations on offer here. All this isn't helped by the absence of speech, instead we have very bland comic book speech bubbles. Ugly and one of those touches that really acts as a barrier to immersing yourself into the story.

Sentient is generally open ended and non-linear in its design. This will be the bane for many gamers, as it's very common to be walking about the ship wondering what to do next. A lack of "Plot Signposts" to steer you in the right direction is severely lacking at times. A good example of this occurs early in the game. A high ranking medical offi-



This game was born on a Playstation. Understand now?

cer directs you to search a crewman's room for some important documents. After completing the snatch and grab mission, the officer says thank you and that's about it... It was then time to wander about asking characters "What should I do now?" which was mostly met by "I don't know". Bloody frustrating, thank goodness I had a walkthrough and was quickly on the lookout for some more documents hidden about the place. If it wasn't for the walkthrough, my impatience would have got the best

of me. Mind you it's a personal taste issue, and many adventurers like this sought of thing. A small hint, look in showers, behind computer desks and generally everywhere, the crew here keep important things in the strangest of places. To make matters even more difficult, your time can be limited by certain actions (as well as the normal passage of time) as Space Station Icarus is constantly descending into it's orbital furnace.

In the future when open ended and advanced AI is the norm in computer games, we might just look back and say it all began with games such as Sentient. On the otherhand Sentient isn't an adventure game in the lofty heights of the Zork Series, Pandora Directive, System Shock etc. While those games will have you questing through the pre-dawn hours Sentient is just overly boring because it relies on dull conversations to keep the storyline moving. While this feature kept me from really enjoying Sentient, gamers that don't mind slow plot advancement and hunting clues around corridors might find some entertainment value.

Peter Sharpe



Somewhat questionable decor colour schemes

68%

Category	Adventure
Players	1
Publisher	Psygnosis
Price	£TBA
Rating	TBA
Available	Now

For A living space station with characters all doing their own thing. Multiple plots and endings that can vary depending on your actions.

Against Slow going and generally frustrating. Graphics while matching the setting in weirdness are blocky and quite jerky. Sluggish controls, this is no Quake engine.

Need P90 16Mb RAM DOS

Want P166 16Mb RAM
DOS/WIN95
180Mb Hard Drive
Space for speedier performance

INTO THE VOID

Yet another foray into the ever expanding space conquest genre.

Except, this one's actually quite good.

The best thing about a large portion of games that enter into the space strategy genre is that most of them are just plain crap. This is good, because after a couple of hours of play you can go to bed safe in the knowledge that they won't pull you from your slumber to play again. Into The Void isn't quite like that. You see, it's actually quite good. Damn good in fact. I've always said that the quality of a game can be measured by the size of the bags under your eyes the following day. Right now I'm sporting some very impressive bags.



The universe is mine, all mine

The premise behind ITV is the same as usual: breed fast, study those technology textbooks and then go around bashing all those neighbours you made alliances with last turn. In a surprisingly realistic twist, the computer AI does the same thing. Shoot first and don't bother asking questions is the motto in ITV. Don't expect aliens to come knocking on your door offering a cup of Twinings, peace is a word that doesn't seem



The ship design screen. No question about it, this game is smooth.

to exist in their vocabulary, a problem it's up to you to change. Taking a planet or two normally suffices.

Diplomacy is awfully limited. In fact, there isn't any. You can tell a race you want to be friendly, they can tell you they want to be friendly, and the deal is struck. There's no alliances, no trading, nothing. Simply non-aggression pacts. In a way it makes the gameplay easier, but it also removes what is normally an integral aspect in strategy games such as this.

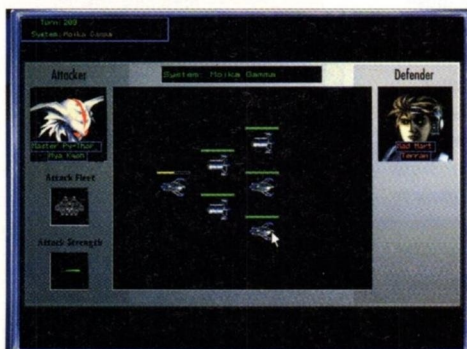
There are six pre-defined races you can play, each with their own advantages and idiosyncrasies. Most are as butt-ugly as you'd expect, with the dweeby technologically advanced race looking remarkably similar to Earthworm Jim. As usual, you have the option of playing humans, but ITV is quite refreshing in

this aspect. Humans aren't the diplomatic superior race as often portrayed in this genre and boring futuristic utopias like Star Trek. Nope, here the humans are bunch of xenophobic aggressive expansionists — which is exactly what we are.

Technologies come in two forms: those that you can add to ships and those that you can use to upgrade buildings. And there are more technologies in ITV than you can poke a stale bread stick at. After a day of constant rapid-play (something I do when I just want to see how far I can get in one sitting) I didn't manage to exhaust the supply of new technologies. Impressive, to say the least. And techs aren't limited to the size of the guns you can slap on your ships. You can research new agricultural methods, build space docks, institute planetary defences and create vast research centers. Want to improve



Star systems offer varied opportunity for conquest.



A not so mighty fleet prepares for the worst...

+ Plus

<http://www.playmatestoy.com/pages/pie/itv.htm>

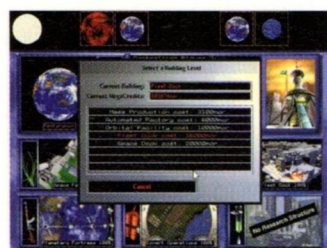
INTO THE VOID
A Strategy Game of Galactic Proportions
The Depths Of Space Are Calling
Explore. At Your Own Risk.



The mouse-click context menu. Strange at first but speeds gameplay later on.



Online help is easy and detailed.



An eminently usable interface.



Even simple trading commodities are presented beautifully.

the quality of your spies? Upgrade your Terrorist Guild to a Guerilla Camp, then send those boys out to steal technology, incite riots or go about blowing up buildings full of people. Fun.

Darn, that looks sexy

The interface is very slick. Animation abounds.

Everything you see from a military outpost on a planet to the weapons systems on a ship are animated with loads of frames. Looks very cool and draws you in. You command your ever expanding empire through a series of context menus which pop up over just about anything and everything. Initially, these

are a little confusing as they change depending on what happens to be currently selected, but once mastered the menu system provides quite an innovative and quick way to manage your planets, ships and resources.

As you might expect in games of this genre there is the odd strange anomaly in ITV. For example you can send spies to an enemy planet to gather data, hassle pedestrians or start all out warfare by blowing up buildings almost instantly, whereas sending a war ship can take ten plus turns in flight time while you wait for it to arrive.

Similarly some of the AI in your ships makes a Weetbix look like a promising conversation partner. Ships are known to shoot one target while ignoring a closer one that's started to pound it. And there's an annoyingly easy trap to fall into when it comes to making hyper-space ships — keep them light. Your ships won't tell you why you can't move, they just won't budge.

Still, the game is addictive to play, that's all I need say. ITV manages to combine all those fun features of power, war and technological advancement in a semi-realistic universe of solar systems and planets. The smart lads at Electric Moo (yeah, my thoughts exactly) even had the brains to design ITV as a networkable and e-mailable game from the ground up. However turns are performed sequentially, not simultaneously, which makes for some long pauses in large multiplayer games.

If you liked MOO and MOO2, then ITV should be on your Christmas list. It's not quite as friendly as the MOO classics, but it does have a little more depth.

Ashton Mills

86%

Category	Turn based strategy
Players	1-10
Publisher	Playmates Interactive
Price	\$TBA
Rating	G
Available	Now

For Lots of races, ships and technologies.

Smooth interface, impressive graphics and annoyingly addictive.

Against ITV suffers from 'big empire syndrome' like many games of this genre' do. When your empire becomes large the game can quickly lose its lustre from the repetitive and tiring management of loads of colony worlds.

Need P60, 8Mb RAM, 2xCD, DOS 5+

Want P90, 16Mb RAM, 4xCD

3D MINI GOLF

Golf games have been around on the PC since the beginning, here's one that's fun!

This takes me back to the days when I used to hang with the local Port Macquarie chapter of the Hell's Angels. On the week-ends we'd cruise around the numerous retirement villages seeing who could cause the most heart attacks with a given number of RPMs. Of course I'd cheat by drilling holes in my muffler and hooning up and down the stairwells, until I got bored and then we'd all head down to the local Putt Golf course to get loaded. My favourite hole was the 'Captain Bluebeard' as its hydraulic water motion always made Stinky puke, providing a much needed extra challenge on the back nine.

50's cocktail music

Now all the fun and excitement of my youth can be yours, with Sierra's new title 3D Ultra Mini-Golf. Eighteen holes of both classic and high tech mini golf to enjoy with up to three of your friends and in the comfort of your very own home, b.y.o. vomit. 3D UMG (yeah

I'm lazy too) greets you with a rather appealing front end, kind of like Cindy Crawford. Cool cheezy 50's cocktail music filled with manic Maracas and burbling Vibes serenade you as you poke through the menus. Setting up a game is a simple matter of a few button clicks - front nine, back nine, full course, normal play or a 'skins' type game are the main options and then you're away. There's also a practise mode but hey, you don't really need to get that anal about it.

Classic windmill hole

The holes are very well designed and will raise a smile on anyone who's ever seen a mini golf course. Everything from the classic windmill hole to a lunar quarry, haunted house and Inca Temple! Some of the holes are damn tricky to say the least with moving conveyor belts, blow hard whales and angry dinosaurs trying to get in your way. Some of the holes also have interactive features like shuttle craft that take your ball on a little trip

Wey hey! It's wacky golf. Fun too

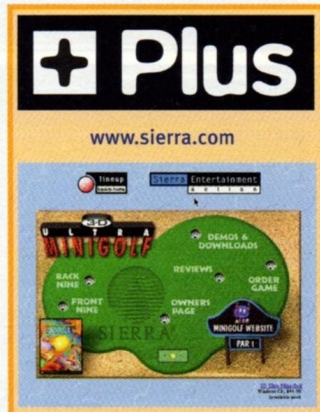


around the green, detonators that blow out walls when struck and volcanoes that erupt with fiery lava flows when your ball gets too close. Unfortunately however 3D UMG doesn't let you select individual holes so it's impossible to just play your favourites. Most people probably won't be too put out by this though as virtually all the holes are fun to play and amusing as well. As a competitor to the variety of Pinball games out there 3D Ultra Mini Golf is perfect for those of you who don't want to make a bigger commitment to your computer than you made to your wife. A fine way to pass time at the office between smoko and your coffee



break or when you want to wind down after a hard day at the abattoir 'nuff said.

George Soropos



80%

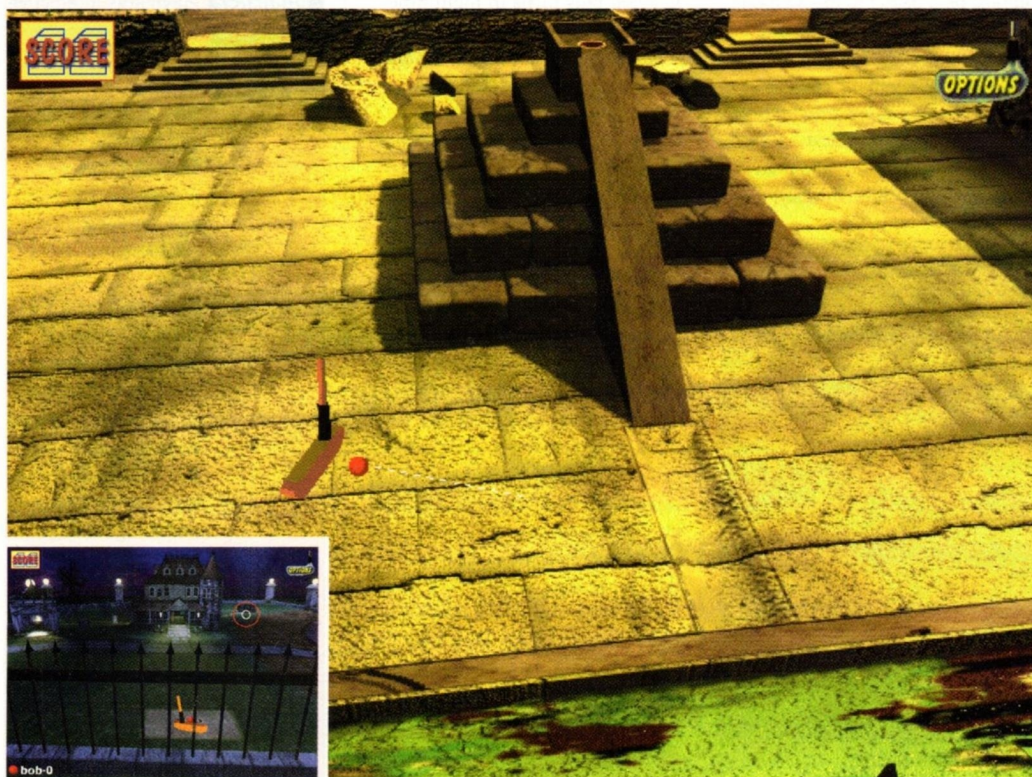
Category	Sports Sim
Players	1-4
Publisher	Sierra
Price	\$TBA
Rating	G
Available	Now

For Easy to learn and fun to play. Smart looking graphics combined with well designed holes.

Against Controls a bit fiddly at times. Longterm enjoyment may be compromised by having only one set of eighteen holes.

Need P90, 16Mb RAM, Win95, 4X CD

Want Nothing special



C&C for Win95

The original and best is back, with sexy SVGA and internet play.



C&C Wings now supports internet play

The original Command and Conquer, upgraded specifically for Windows 95. A perfect excuse to launch into some Microsoft jokes along the lines of "Did you hear the one about Bill Gates stuck on a desert island, with a load of IBM programmers and a crazed sheep?" On the other hand, we here at PowerPlay are a semi-respectable lot and don't like to propagate the myth that Microsoft is only slightly less menacing than the Brotherhood of Nod. In all fairness though, after playing Red Alert in its SVGA Wings incarnation, going back to the original C&C DOS and its big and blocky VGA graphics was enough to make you wince. So, if you have an urge to see a flame throwing tank roast

some infantry just like the good old days (but in SVGA), Westwood have come to the rescue.

4 X bigger view

C&C's conversion to SVGA graphics looks very tasty indeed. For those familiar to Red Alert it has basically the same appearance, with all units and buildings being small but highly detailed and greatly better looking than the old days of VGA. Correspondingly the view of the battlefield is now four times larger, which has its good points but also an annoying off shoot. The increased viewing area allows for more effective planning as you can see more troops and just generally have a better Bird's Eye view of your proceedings. The downside of all this is that the original C&C battlemaps seem very small in comparison with Red Alert. Well actually they are smaller in comparison as Westwood have not included Red Alert's feature of bigger map sizes in C&C95. Westwood's omission in this area is a bit of a disappointment and makes multi-player games seem overly cramped at times. In saying that, I'm not in a hurry to go back to crusty old VGA. SVGA is here and we're all the better for it.

Take on the world

Internet junkies will be very pleased to know that C&C95 is playable over WChat. For the uninitiated, WChat is Westwood's game server where you can hook up with

warmongers from all around the world to chat and most importantly, play some C&C. It's a free service, easily installed and generally hassle free, the only limitation being two people per game. My first game had me battling an American fellow who beat me all too easily. In the name of Aussie pride I then engaged a Swedish opponent, which saw my Nod army come through with the goods... just. Red Alert is still the most popular game on WChat, but drumming up a game of C&C isn't too hard.

Apart from some bonus screen-savers and Plus Pack themes, there isn't a lot more to C&C95. Sure, new units and more missions would have been nice, but what we have here is good old C&C with a new facelift. It's difficult to put a final score on this as it really depends on what your priorities are. If you don't own the original game, go and grab C&C95 now as this is the definitive version of a classic game. If C&C DOS has a home in your CD rack then it's a case of weighing up whether playing on WChat is worth the asking price. I'm a C&C nut and

can't get enough of it, so WChat is a second home for me. If you want to play in SVGA and are attracted to the idea of indulging in some combat with the world community, then C&C95 will not disappoint.

Peter Sharpe

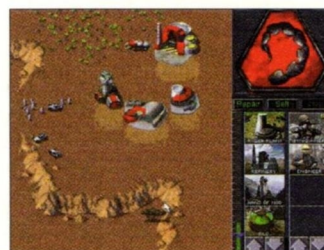


The new, huge viewing area makes C&C's original maps look small

+ Plus

www.westwood.com -The warlords themselves.

Good news is that C&C95 is compatible with the old Covert Ops expansion disk and will also play over the modem with C&C DOS.



A spruced-up interface

80%

Category	Strategy
Players	1-4 (network)
Publisher	Westwood Studios
Price	\$TBA
Rating	MA15+
Available	Now

For The original legendary C&C with improved graphics and Internet Play, nuff said.

Against Not much for those wanting something new in the C&C arena. You can still sandbag your way to the enemy base.

Need Low end Pentium, 8Mb RAM, Win95, 28.8 Modem for Internet Play and a fast ISP.

Want P100, 16Mb RAM, hunger for battle.



review

YOU DON'T KNOW JACK - MOVIES EDITION

Amazing. Who'd have thought that you could make a decent game without amazing graphics and things that explode...

For those of you that have been crouching in a foetal position within a locked cupboard for the past year or two, 'You Don't Know Jack' is one of the best computer games of the past few years. An audacious statement, I know, but it's warranted. YDKJ is an irreverent trivia quiz game with a laconic host that successfully walks the line between traditional American obnoxiousness and just plain funny-ness, questions that are ridiculously twisted in ways that make you giggle and think at the same time, and absolutely hilarious (as well as powerfully ironic) fake advertisements placed at the end. It's absolutely great. If you don't have the original YDKJ



Questions are viable but tough.

yet, get it now. And while you're at the local games store, you'll probably want to get a copy of YDKJ - Movies Edition too. You might well be thinking 'A movie edition!? I know heaps about movies! I'll be able to beat the pants of all my friends and become wildly popular and good looking!'. Read on.

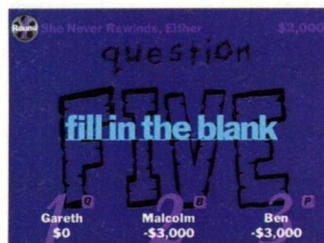
Everyone's an expert...

It's a funny thing, but when we got our hands on a copy of this, everyone (including me) immediately began saying how 'movies were their speciality' and that they were going to trounce everyone else. Sure YDKJ was a great trivia game (and still is) but everyone seems to think that they have an encyclopedic memory of every movie ever made, and thus when

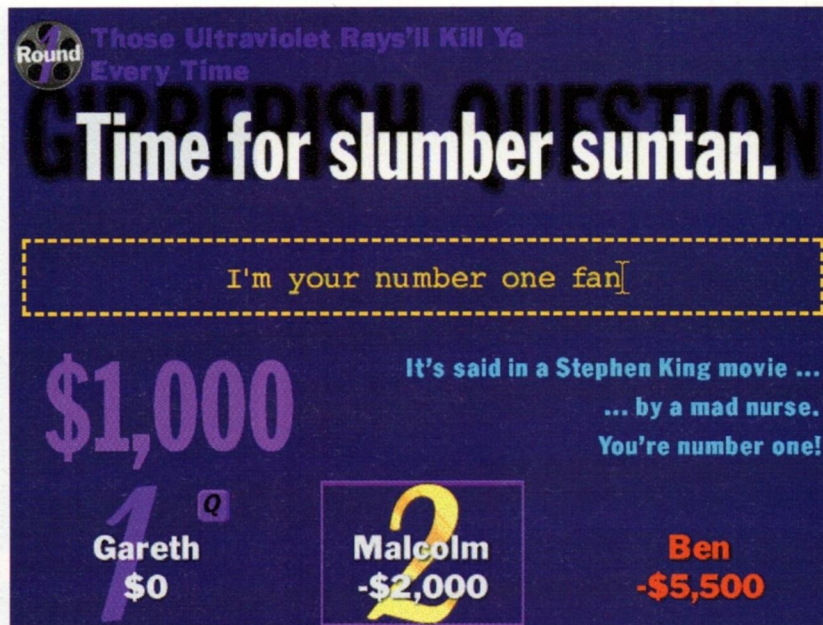
we began a few rounds of YDKJ - Movies Edition there were plenty of faces looking expectantly victorious. However, it was time for all of us to take a reality check when the final Jack Attack was over - we didn't know half (or even a quarter) as much as we thought we did. Or maybe the questions were too hard. Or maybe... but the excuses are just that, excuses. The compere of YDKJ-ME is a completely obnoxious and supercilious American prick, typifying all the qualities any sensible person loathes - when you screw up an answer he's going to be there with a caustic comment to make you feel even stupider, or he'll just generally degrade you during the game. The thing is, he does it so well that I didn't get offended, and instead I found myself laughing heartily at his nasty little jibes rather than throwing my mouse at the screen.

It's FUNNY!

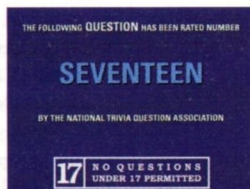
Anyway, it's a good thing that YDKJ-ME isn't a cakewalk - nobody wants to play a game that's too easy, and nor do they want to play a game that's too hard. YDKJ-ME



Even an old 486 (8Mb) can run this



It's a funny and competitive game this, although bizarre scoring anomalies do occur.



Funny question intros.



is neither too hard or too easy though, it's just right. It's got all the wit and polish of the original YDKJ's, but the questions are, obviously enough, about movies rather than general trivia. There's new introductory sequences to all the questions too, and they're often very funny as well, both visually and aurally. A nice touch is that

there are two or three different intro sequences for each question, which helps to keep the game var-



www.berksys.com/products/jack/movies.html for the Movies homepage, but to play the online version of YDKJ and YDKJ - Sports Edition go to www.bezerk.com. Be warned though - the sports edition questions are often very Amero-centric.



ied and re-playable. So you can expect all the good things that came with the original YDKJ as well as some very pretty enhancements and some very witty enhancements. It's one that's going to stay on my hard drive for a long, long time.

Gareth Jones

88%	
Category	Trivia Quiz
Players	1-3 (same computer)
Publisher	Berkely Systems
Price	\$49.95
Rating	M15+
Available	Now
For	Continues the fun of the first YDKJ releases without getting stale. Heaps of questions, heaps of commentary, heaps of fun.
Against	Only three players maximum. Surely four could be accommodated?
Need	486DX/33.16Mb RAM, 4xCD, Win 95/Win 3.1x
Want	Nothing special

RISING LANDS

COMING SOON

Hundreds of years have passed since humanity was nearly totally decimated by a cataclysm which destroyed civilisation on Earth. The new society was tribal, forced to live in Medieval conditions once again. Made up of clans allied for or against one another on hostile ground....



Actual Screen Shots

"Last month we suspected Rising Lands would kill Warcraft2. Well, this month our suspicions are confirmed. With more appreciable aspects, this game is preparing the murder of its predecessor!"
GENERATION 4,
FRANCE, MAY '97



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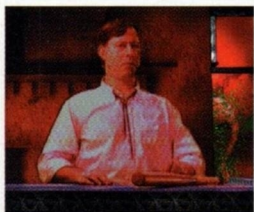
Fax: (02) 9674 7398

Download the playable Demo - www.impact.com.au - coming soon

SHIVERS 2

Puzzle games come dressed in the most unlikely wrapping these days...

The plot would have been rejected by 'The X-Files'. Some friends of yours, members of the unnecessarily-goateed rock group Trip Cyclone, have been staying in the tiny American town of Cyclone (spook!) buried deep inside a foreboding canyon. While shooting videos there for a couple of weeks, they are intrigued by the recent mysterious disappearance of a number of the locals. So they decide to investigate, promising to conceal in their newly-made video clips any clues they might find. A terribly contrived idea, I know, but - hey! - it's a computer game.



Nutter inn-keeper. With bat

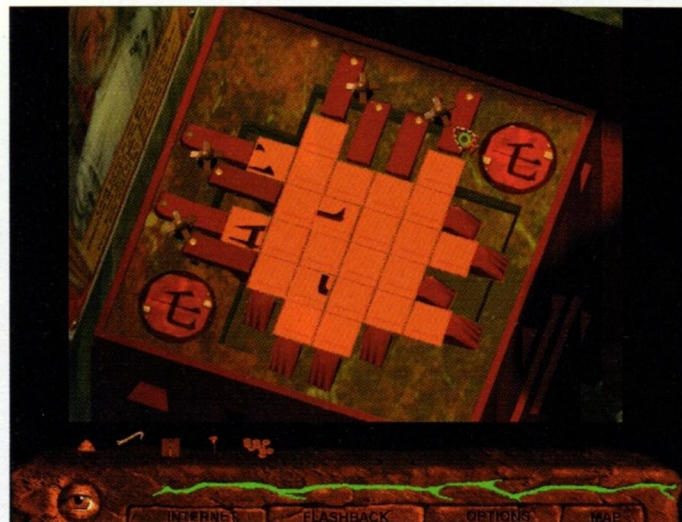
stick. Is this making sense?

It turns out that you have to take this bent stick into the big dark spooky canyon and place it into the correct slot in this thing called the Kiva. And all the time you're carrying this stick, your health is depleting for seemingly arbitrary reasons. Oh, and while you're in the canyon don't forget to find the squiggle on the wall that matches your bent stick and complete the hopelessly unentertaining jigsaw puzzle that will open the way to the Kiva. Try not to take too long, mind, 'cos otherwise you'll be dead.

Two kinds of puzzles

There are twelve of these sticks in all (which means twelve jigsaw puzzles too!), and each has to be found and placed in the Kiva before you win the game. Accomplishing this entails wandering around town reading books and scraps of paper that say things like, "In the beginning, the creatures of the world lived in the second world deep under the ground..." and solving two kinds of puzzles. The first type of puzzle involves doing simplistic activities such as putting a video tape into a video player, or reading a letter that says there's a key under Burt's trailer then going to Burt's trailer and picking up the key.

The second sort of puzzle will constantly thrill you with riveting sequences where, for example, you may have to bounce an egg across a

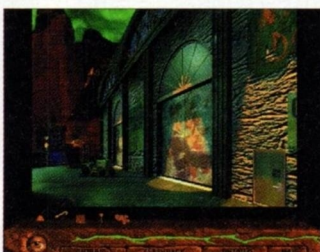


Despite its Rock n Roll FMV adventure look, Shivers 2 is actually a puzzle game. Puzzling eh?

maze without it falling down a hole. Others I have encountered consisted of rolling eight balls through a system of tubes to place them in numerical order, guessing where the cards are after they have been shuffled around, forming a symbol with some sliding blocks, guiding a spider through another maze, and (at last count) five bloody jigsaw puzzles. I simply cannot wait for the one in which I'll have to create 5 piles of 2 donuts in 5 moves, or to move the marbles onto their matching squares in 38 moves or less!

Never once, while playing Shivers 2, did I feel like I was participating in anything more than a flimsy excuse to string together a couple of dozen extremely dodgy, and mostly unrelated, logic puzzles. This is an adventure game with no plot, no mystery, no atmosphere, no challenge, and no adventure.

David Wildgoose



Being a sierra game, the graphics are top notch

http://www.sierra.com/entertainment/shivers2/

52%

Category Adventure
Players 1
Publisher Sierra
Price \$TBA
Rating MA15+
Available Now

For The suitably eerie music is quite good.

Against There's a story and some terrible puzzles, but they have absolutely nothing to do with each other. Unhealthily pointless.

Need 486DX2/66, 12Mb RAM, 2xCD

Want Pentium, 16Mb RAM, 4xCD, Win95



F-16[®]

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Digital Integration

NBA Jam Extreme

CATEGORY Sports/Arcade

PLAYERS 1-4

PUBLISHER Acclaim

PRICE \$TBA

RATING G

AVAILABLE Now

NEED P133, 16Mb RAM,
WIN 95

WANT P166, 16Mb RAM, 4
button Gamepad

overall

39%

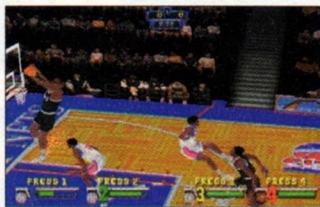
A Disappointing and
unnecessary sequel.

Those of us that have spent way too long gaming have seen NBA Jam appear on most gaming formats over the years. Starting as a coin swallower in arcades, and then appearing on the fondly remembered Megadrive and SNES, NBA Jam was a popular title for those who like their Basketball high on action and low on rules. Two on two Basketball, with all out fouling encouraged and a heavy flavouring of somersaulting Dunks and general antics that Superman would be proud of. Well it's 1997 and NBA Jam Extreme attempts to make a home on the PC. Boasting newly improved 3D graphics, textured polygon players and new extreme moves, Acclaim are hoping for a new round of Slamming action.

The setup procedure is similar to the original. All the NBA teams to choose from and all the players ranked with different abilities, such as passing, speed and the all important Dunk factor. It has to be said that playing this game without a four

button gamepad will have you playing "Finger Twister" on your keyboard or missing out on turbo and Extreme powerups on a two button Control pad.

Into the game sees running commentary and textured Polygons everywhere, but it just doesn't come together well. The ball moves in odd angles and the players sort of stagger towards the backboard. Controls were far from responsive and while the super moves are not too frustrating to execute, the whole fun factor was way down because of the above problems. The biggest downer though with this "suped up" version is the generally crap graphics engine. On full detail the game was a slideshow on a P150. Switching to low res mode, turning off floor textures, crowd etc did not improve



New! Flaming Max Air Super Tops Nikes!

things. Considering that NBA Live 97 ran quite well on the same P150, it's a real disappointment to see the poor performance of NBA Jam considering it has to move considerably less objects around the screen than the big boy of NBA titles.

This sequel while adding some new Extreme powerup dunks etc just doesn't add anything worthwhile to NBA Jam. It's less fun because of stodgy controls, poor graphics and the like. Whilst the original uses sprites and is not a whizz bang in the brave new world of 3D it's faster paced than this offering and is just a whole lot more entertaining.

Peter Sharpe

Vegas Games

CATEGORY Virtual Gambling

PLAYERS 1-4

PUBLISHER New World Computing

PRICE \$TBA

RATING G

AVAILABLE Now

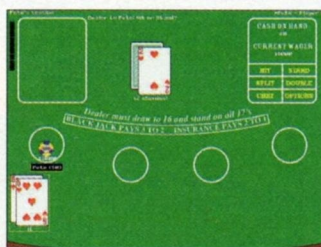
NEED 486/33, 8Mb RAM
WIN 95

WANT 486/66 with above

overall

60%

Not as flashy as other gambling sims, but it gets the job done.



Urban computer myth No. 33 - While playing Vegas games, Mr X jammed his PC by shoving coins into the floppy drive

Computer gambling sims offer different things to different people. For the real life gamblers they offer a controlled environment for testing strategies out for that "Big" win in the Casino down the road. For the crowd who indulge in Windows Solitaire, Poker and Blackjack Win95 style can offer a similar sort of enjoyment. In my case, it was seeing how easy 1000 bucks of virtual cash could be flittered away in under half an hour. Oh well, if we dress up in Tuxedos, deck out our computer room in lots of green velvet we can get a vague taste of the high rolling lifestyle.

Vegas Games showcases six games that will be familiar to those fond of all things card and dice. First off the rank are the Slot Machine and Video

Poker coin cruncher sims. While the real life variants of these one armed bandits are known for inducing chronic boredom, wait to you try the cashless versions on offer here. Choose how much "money" you pump in and then mouse click away, a very dull experience. Video Keno suffers from the same affliction. Similar to Lotto (but with more variation in the odds), you pick some random numbers and see if they come up trumps.. Zzzz. The last three are Blackjack, Craps and Roulette. They not only inject some skill into the proceedings, but allow for some multi-player participation. Internet, Modem and Serial play are available and have to be a major step up from that dreaded slot machine. A very strange omission is that Poker (of

the card variety) has been left out. This is usually a standard inclusion in such gambling games and is sort of like leaving out the shotgun in a Doom clone.

While everything is well handled with a simple Mouse interface and appropriate graphics and sound Vegas Games is quite bare boned. Other gambling sims (i.e. Hoyle Casino reviewed back in PowerPlay #10) offer clever computer opponents and a whole Casino atmosphere. Vegas Games is just six self contained gambling sims with no frills or gloss. Still, there aren't any faults in the presentation so if you like the idea of having a flutter on your PC, Vegas Games will keep you amused.

Peter Sharpe

g i v e

a u r a l

e



T D K d o e s a m a z i n g
t h i n g s t o m y s y s t e m

Flip Out!

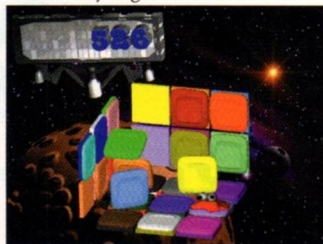
CATEGORY	Puzzle
PLAYERS	1
PUBLISHER	Gametek
PRICE	STBA
RATING	G
AVAILABLE	Now
NEED	486DX/33, 8Mb RAM, 2xCD
WANT	486DX2/66, 16Mb RAM

overall

73%

An inventive, neat, compelling puzzler with some gorgeously globby aliens.

After an endearingly cute opening sequence, Flip Out! presents a coloured 3x3 square grid surrounded by a number of gorgeously globby aliens. On closer inspection, it is revealed that the grid is actually a layer of coloured squares on the ground and a set of like-coloured tiles placed on top. Press Ctrl and the game starts with all the tiles tossed into the air, along with a tenth 'rogue' grey tile, before they begin to fall back onto



the wrong squares. The aim is to move the cursor around the grid, tossing (or flipping) tiles until they all match up again. Strategy becomes evident when you realise that the tile you just flipped will land on the square vacated by the next tile you flip. Of course, if you don't manage to flip that next tile in time, the previous one will come crashing down on top of another one and the game will be lost. It's all a bit like juggling then. Only a bit easier, and a hell of a lot more fun.

Things become complicated somewhat when, after a few increasingly difficult layouts of tiles, the grid changes to a pyramid of six tables where you have to flip food to match the hungry aliens, or a fractured Mount Rushmore where you must hurl around bits of dead presidents. A little later there is an 'anti-gravity' level with a floor and two walls of tiles that flip in different



The only puzzle game to feature little green men and a disco ball

directions and it all gets pretty confusing. Yet, at the same time, remaining undeniably engaging.

And I haven't even mentioned what antics those gorgeously globby aliens get up to. They start walking on top of all your tiles so it's hard to see which colour the squares are, they lie on top of tiles so you can't flip them, they (good lord!) eat tiles so you have to 'flip' them several times and force them to cough it back up, they flip tiles themselves and, oh, plenty more besides, but I seem to have run out of space.

David Wildgoose

Luna Ticks

CATEGORY	Action/Strategy
PLAYERS	1-8
PUBLISHER	Manacomm
PRICE	\$39.95
RATING	G
AVAILABLE	Now
NEED	486/33, 8Mb RAM, DOS
WANT	Non-Ninja should cope fine.

overall

61%

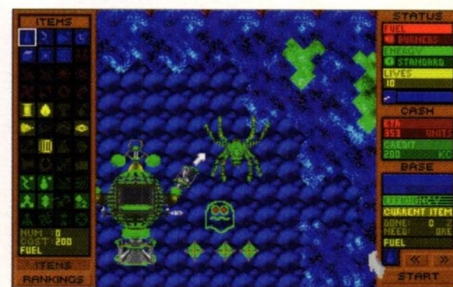
Simple but entertaining, Luna Ticks is an Aussie game so at least grab the shareware and check it out.

Launching into a game of Luna Ticks for the first time brought back visions of the Commodore 64. At the risk of sounding like an old fart gamer, it was a time when gameplay had to have an original twist and stand on its own two feet without the help of flashy graphics and the like. On the other hand, there is no way any of us would swap our modern hard drives for that clunky old horror that was the C-64 tapedeck! Thankfully while Luna Ticks boasts graphics that are comparable with the C-64, no tapedeck is needed.

Luna Ticks has you controlling a robotic mining vehicle called a "Tick". The idea is to enter a series of mazes where you have a factory that produces all manner of trinkets from Tick power-ups, factory defenses and the all important Credit Pods. Of course, trinkets need resources and thus you power your Tick about the place shooting off and collecting Cutter Orbs that mine precious material out of the maze walls. Every now and then a ship representing the "Greedy Bank Manager" cruises by and you must

pay back your mining debt through Credit Pods. You aren't alone in your urge to pay back the bank and there are other mining setups in each maze, allowing everybody to steal Credit Pods, Cutter Orbs and generally create havoc with each other. The trick involves balancing your resources so you are mining as much as possible, while building enough weapons to keep those enemy prospectors busy... all the while decreasing your loan with the big boy financier.

You can comprehensively alter the playing style by a whole gamut of options that adjusts everything from the enemy AI to weapon technology. Playing the computer does get a bit dull after a while, but not to fear as Luna Ticks offers Network and Modem/Serial support. Network with 8



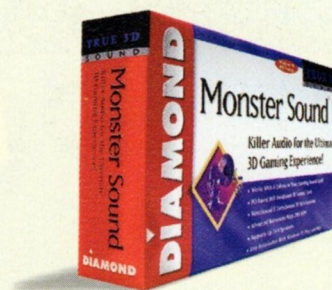
This doesn't look like your average strategy game...

people all battling away in mining Ticks... it's got the potential for a Friday night junk food free for all. While definitely not an earth shattering release, Luna Ticks has got a fun twist doing resource management the light hearted way.

Peter Sharpe



MONSTER SOUND. Listen up. If you're not experiencing Diamond Multimedia's outrageous Monster Sound 3D PCI sound card, you're really missing something. Monster Sound provides true CD-quality 3D positional audio—with up to 24 independent audio streams—and support for Microsoft's DirectSound and DirectSound 3D APIs. It also comes bundled with a suite of advanced audio applications. Monster Sound will do for your ears what Monster 3D did for your PC graphics. So visit us on the Web at www.diamondmm.com/monstersound for all the facts and the location of your nearest Diamond retailer. Because hearing is believing.



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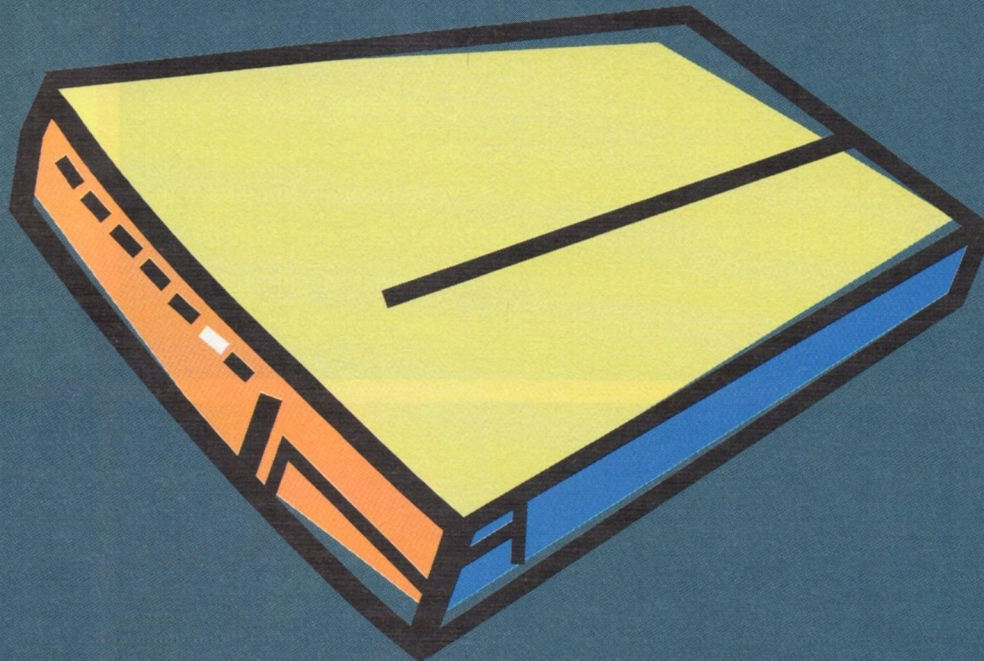


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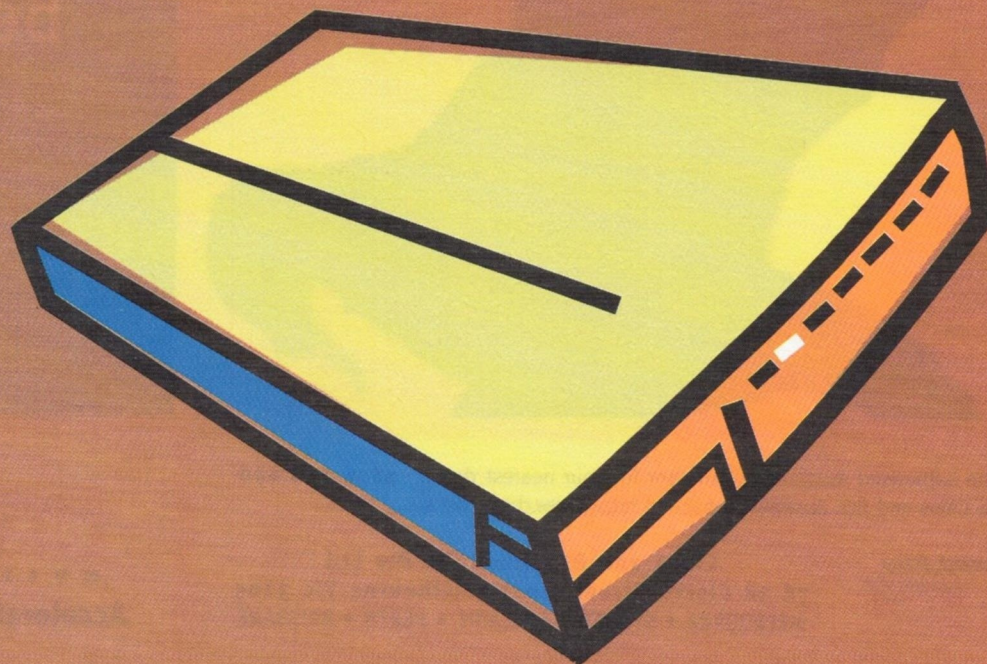
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WHICH MODEM?

THE POWERPLAY LAB TEST

by Daniel Cohen





With more and more services these days moving into the online world, it seems as though if you don't have a modem you could well be missing out on something. Modems have proved that they can do more than just transfer files, with added speed and voice functionality they have become a standard item for anyone working from a Home Office, as it is now also fax machine and an answering service. All this is good and useful, but as we all know, a modem really only serves one purpose - to expand your gaming horizons. A modem offers you the opportunity to play your favourite game live over the phone lines with a friend, or even on the internet with users from all around the world. As modems evolve so does the technology immediately around it, but how can we possibly leap into something that we are still so unclear about? The tests carried out for this article were only one factor in the overall scheme of things. There is much more to a modem than blazing transfer speeds, and with the help of this guide we hope to clear the air of some of the confusion, as well as give you an insight into which modem not only performs best in online games, but can also assist you with your everyday SOHO needs.

The Setup

To test these modems we had to make a neutral environment, a situation where no modem would be operating under better conditions than the next. To do this I set up two near identical Pentium 133's with 32 megabytes of RAM, 16550 serial chips and running Windows 95. The software used was HyperTerminal, as standard with Windows 95. To create a consistent phone line devoid of any interference we used a PSTN (Public Switched Telephone Network) emulator. This took out any extra variables that can affect a modem's performance; line noise, random modems at the other end of the line, time of day etc., and by doing so we created, if not perfect line conditions, a telephone line that could be consistently relied upon to allow these modems to operate at 100%.

The modems were assembled straight out of the box and connected using the drivers supplied, otherwise the standard Windows '95 driver would be installed. The port speed was set to 115 200 for every modem, and with the exception of the 2 US Robotics modems, none of the modems received any initialisation other than at&f (to restore factory defaults) or atso=2

for the answering modem to answer the calls. (Late at night I also slipped in an atmo to disable the speaker - modems can make a sound that will pierce an otherwise quiet night!). The criteria for the test was to record the average transfer speed of a 1 megabyte text file and a 1 megabyte compressed file (zip format) - both sending and receiving using the Z-modem protocol. Each file was sent and received 3 times and the average CPS (characters per second) was recorded.

All of the modems were pitted against two of the industry leaders - the Netcomm SmartModem 336 and the Hayes Optima BusinessModem 336. The Hayes choice was straight forward - any modem purchased in Australia would be a Hayes-Compatible modem. Hayes are recognised as being the first company to make a modem (almost 20 years ago when they released their first 300 bps modem) and have been front-runners ever since. Hayes' premier modem, the Optima BusinessModem 336 boasts the latest in DSP technology and can feasibly communicate at 230 400 bps using 8:1 compression. The Netcomm Smartmodem 336 is in the same class using the Rockwell 288DPi DSP chipset with the Motorola 68302 CPU and 2 megabytes of RAM, it too can compress data up to 8 times allowing for a potential throughput of 230k bps. The other reason for selecting this modem is that a large percentage of bulletin boards and Internet Service Provider dial-ups are Netcomm modems.

The Line-Up

All of the modems boasted so many features that it would take some time to actually read the entire contents of any of the boxes. But we need to focus on one feature of each, and that is the maximum operating speed of the modems. In this case we are using a v34 modem, or 33.6k (that's 33 600 characters per second). All of the modems supplied can communicate at lower speeds than the prescribed, but our tests want to provide reliability at speed. All of the cables, manuals and software supplied with the modems were for PC connections unless otherwise specified. Most external modems are not computer specific (this excludes the Global Village Teleport which is Mac only), and in most cases all that is needed for a Mac to use any of these modems is a Mac modem cable (see your dealer or the manufacturer for more details). All boxes but a few contained assorted Internet Service Provider disks.

An Overview of "The Perfect Modem"

In my mind there is such thing as "The Perfect Modem", but of course I am yet to meet it. This modem would be of an ideal size so that you could place it on your desk where it is accessible and easy to view, yet out of harms way. With most modems you receive a huge transformer that renders half of the sockets on a power-board useless. The perfect modem would have a plug that takes up just the required space which allows all outlets to be accessible. All features of this modem should be easy to operate (such as the power on/off switch), the software drivers included install without fuss, and the manual be informative yet not too lengthy. If something should go wrong, you know there's a good team behind you to make things right with The Perfect Modem, and of course The Perfect Modem doesn't cost an arm and a leg.

The Perfect Modem will be the 'yard-stick' by which the varying features of the modems being tested will be measured.

Avtek MegaModem 336

For years now, Avtek have been putting good reliable modems on the market at an affordable cost. This Avtek modem comes in a consumer-friendly plastic case on a cardboard backing that allows you to see everything included, but although the large yellow sticker might say "Open With Care, Installation Instructions On Back" it's not that easy. Once I had clawed my way inside I found a compact power plug, ideal in size allowing full access to other sockets on the board. The Avtek requires a unique cable, with a 9 pin parallel to a circular 8 pin at the other end. For me to use this modem however I required a 9-25 pin parallel converter, which unfortunately was not supplied in the packaging. 6 floppy disks were also supplied; 2 with driver software, 2 for Adobe Acrobat, and 2 for the Cooee communications software.

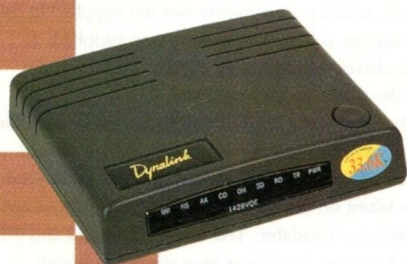
Over the years Avtek modems have adopted the shell of other modems; most recently it looked like a Motorola LifeStyle, but the new look Avtek has taken on the form of the popular palm-sized Netcomm Roadster. The LED's are small and difficult to view but it was very simple to install from the drivers supplied. The Avtek performed below par when everything was weighed up, however it was reliable and never hiccuped enroute to producing times that were perhaps a shade under the average in its class. The Avtek also comes in a Mac pack, complete with Mac cables and the MacComCentre software package for terminal and fax communication.



Banksia WaveSP



Banksia MyFastModem



Dynalink

BANKSIA WAVESP



The WaveSP comes in packaging that is unlike any other, and the actual modem is on full display inside the triangular plastic casing. There were no problems installing the modem using the drivers supplied on the CD-ROM and following the instructions painted on a colourful 6 page leaflet. The manual itself is adequate and the power adaptor is large but narrow, proving to be power-board friendly. The cable is a 9-9 pin parallel, but a 9-25 pin converter is supplied for those who use a 25 pin com port. Also included is a line-out cable that makes its way from the modem to your sound card. This means that when you are using SVD (Simultaneous Voice and Data), you can hear through the speakers attached to the computer, and communicate with the built-in microphone. The modem acts as a full-duplex speakerphone - this means that you can talk hands free without sounding as though you are in an empty room.

The modem itself takes on the shape of a wave, with a convex front panel looking a bit like a miniature Sydney Opera House. The indicator lights are large, well marked and easy to view even at an angle. All cables slip easily into the marked ports on the back, and the power switch on the right-hand side is easy to access. Performance-wise the WaveSP behaved a little better than most. It connected to both host modems efficiently, and was a shade quicker than the bulk of the modems at both sending and receiving data. There is room for an optional headset.

BANKSIA MYFASTMODEM

The MyFastModem is part of the Banksia SOHO series, and has retained its mid-sized case that the first MyFastModems were shipped in. It comes with QuickLink II fax and terminal software and informative manuals for using both the modem and QuickLink II. It was very easy to install, the transformer fits harmoniously into a power-board, but if there is one issue with the MyFastModem it is the On/Off switch - it's very difficult to find and stiff to operate.

Connecting to both the Optima and the SmartModem 33.6 was no problem, and data communication was solid throughout and there was little wait for the file transfer to commence. In all the MyFastModem was a stable competitor, but its current pricing perhaps doesn't suit as it does not offer any voice capabilities.

DYNALINK V1433VQE

This modem has everything that's necessary to get started - a 33.6k modem with SVD, a set of headphones with microphone that plug straight into the right panel of the modem, and driver disks that make the installation simple. The power plug was disproportionately large, the RS-

232 cable rattled when it moved and the manual, although informative fell into the "generic" category, and made no mention of the fact that it was for the modem you had in front of you.

When transferring data it was found to be a the slowest of the lot, but the minimal characters per second transfer difference equates to seconds at best. It was up to 5 seconds slower sending the zip file (taking approximately 4:48) over 1 megabyte. At the time of reviewing the Dynalink came free with a full version of one of the most popular 3D action games, Quake. For those who have more to do than play games, you can swap Quake for either VoiceGuard or InternetPhone, both full versions.

GVC TELEPORT (NOT SHOWN)

The Global Village Communications modem is a Mac only modem that requires a Geoport or similar connection to operate. The modem itself is very small, and the cable is stuck to the body of the modem. It ends in a DIN 8 pin plug, which slots right into your Geoport. The box itself is covered with features, it might even be a little too busy, but is roughly the same size as Quark Xpress and makes for easy storage on a shelf or in a cupboard. The modem needs no external power, as it draws its power through the serial cable. The Getting Started Guide explains what each of the components are, and how to go about installing them.

The modem fits in your hand, and consists of only 3 LED's. There is an on-screen display in the menu-bar of any application if you are connected using this modem, making it easy to keep track of throughput and progress. When pitted against our test modems we found that it performed as well as the rest of them, and there were no dramas getting the modem to respond in Zterm 'out of the box', nor did it have any problems sending or receiving data.

HAYES ACCURA MESSAGEMODEM 336

The Hayes modems come in colourful compact boxes with the numbers 3-3-6 plastered on the cover. Once you remove the egg-carton packaging from inside you are confronted by 3 disks (SmartCom LE spans 2 disks, the other contains the Accura Windows drivers), manuals for SmartCom and a Netscape Navigator Personal Edition CD. The power pack that will fit into any standard power outlet comfortably allowing all ports to remain accessible. However the manual for the modem is a standard guide for Hayes modems, and it contained no information specific to the Accura. The same manual was found in the Optima box, and although it was easy to read and contained good installation instructions it would have been nice to have a model-specific manual.

The modem itself is a sleek low-profile unit that makes the LED's easy to view. The power switch located at the back right by nature is dif-

difficult to operate, but perhaps because of the lower profile it is easier to access than most like it. When connected to its stable-mate it transferred files rapidly, averaging a very high speed except for receiving the text file where it was evenly spaced between the 'elite' modems and the rest of the field. It's important to note here that the 9.8k per second achieved in our tests with the Netcomm and the Hayes Optima are near to the 115.6k bps maximum speed the Accura can achieve when utilising full compression. Perhaps the one drawback with this modem is that it is not Flash-ROM upgradeable, which means when the Accura steps up to 56k technology you will have to return the modem to the manufacturer for a replacement.

HAYES OPTIMA MESSAGEMODEM 336



The Hayes Optima, as mentioned in the preamble, is one of the more advanced modems available today, and these tests outlined just what the difference is between the high-end modems and the rest.

It too comes in a compact box, which when emptied reveals disks containing SmartCom MessageCentre LE and the Windows drivers, as well as the respective SmartCom and standard Hayes modem manual. The phone cable provided was ready to build, and the Windows Plug'n'Play installation was quick and effortless.

As the tests proved when talking to a SmartModem it really does utilise the extra power it possesses making transfer speeds quicker, and when connected to the Hayes Accura it once again outshone. The major drawback with this modem is its price, which is currently listed at \$399. This takes the modem out of many peoples price range, but if you require either a message centre for your home office or a modem that can transfer large files quickly, then this modem is a worthy option. Future upgrades for the Hayes Optima are Flash-ROM (software) upgradeable, which means you need only download the latest drivers from the internet or the Hayes BBS to stay in touch with the latest speeds. After being left on for a short time the modem started to get quite warm, though it did not affect the performance in our tests.

HAYES OPTIMA PCMCIA 28.8 (NOT SHOWN)



This modem will fit simply into any Type 2 or Type 3 PCMCIA slot, laptop or desktop dock. It had no problems connecting to the Powerbook we used for the occasion, and took kindly to the emulator and the lab conditions.

Even though it was only a 28.8k bps modem we put it through its paces. It had no problems connecting to either modem, but it did communicate with the Hayes a little better. It was quick to get into a constant rhythm, and performed well when both sending a receiving text.

MICRONICA JUMBUCK SAVD



When I looked at the Micronica modem box I was confused - although the box told me it was a 33.6k bps fax modem with voice, I was unsure of what it was called. I was then drawn to the unobtrusive sticker in the lower left hand corner which informed me that it was the Jumbuck SAVD. Inside the box the surprises continued - there were no driver disks or Internet Service Provider disks, the power supply was large and branded with a yellow Micronica sticker, and the manual was poorly worded. The only thing that made this manual a Micronica manual was the sticker on the front cover. No headphones were included in the package. The modem did autodetect at startup, and when prompted to install a driver I was advised by Micronica in Melbourne to use the standard modem driver for Windows '95.

The modem itself is a small light green unit, and when it was taken out of the box the back panel almost fell off exposing the circuit board and various wires. The front panel has 9 LED's and also contains the headphone and microphone jacks. Needless to say, the only badge on the modem itself was a Micronica sticker.

All of the aesthetic values aside, the Jumbuck did prove to be reliable when connecting to both of the subject modems. It wasn't the quickest in its class, but it did move the files between the remote computer and itself efficiently, although it tended to be slower when sending both the compressed file and text data.

NETCOMM ROADSTER



When I opened the Roadster box the first thing to greet me was a 4 page leaflet explaining to me what everything was and where it was meant to go. The cable supplied is the unique Roadster 9 pin parallel to DIN 8 modem cable, and a 9-25 pin converter was included. There is also a set of headphones with a microphone attached for all of those nights spent utilising the SVD functions of this modem. Most modems have 2 ports at the rear to allow piggy backing of your telephone hand-set, but because the Roadster is so compact Netcomm have provided a phone cable that will allow a hand-set to be added onto the back on the modem connection. With the assistance of the Netcomm CD installation was simple once the modem had been detected during startup.

The modem itself is same 'size of your palm' unit we have become accustomed to, with the power switch on the rear left and the headset/microphone ports a little closer to the front. When put to the test the Netcomm Roadster performed above most with compressed files, but was very much the same for text transfers, both sending and receiving.



Hayes Accura



Hayes Optima



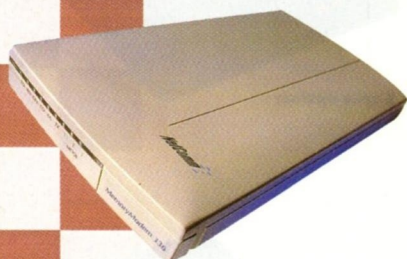
Micronica Jumbuck



Netcomm Roadster



Netcomm SmartModem



Netcomm MemoryModem



Spirit Cobra 336

NETCOMM SMARTMODEM 336 (D)



The Netcomm SmartModem range is the elite of the Netcomm fleet, all headed by the 336D. This modem offers DSVD - Digital Simultaneous Voice and Data which is more advanced than the analog counterpart. The 336 box had no hidden surprises, just the appropriate cables and CD with drivers, modem software and demonstration software. The 336D box comes with an extra phone cord for extending from the modem to your handset. Mac packs are available for both the 336 and the 336D and cost just \$10 more for the Macintosh modem cable and the MacComCentre software.

Netcomm modems are sleek by design, and their flat, long and thin appearance has been retained through many years of upgrades from the early Netcomm SmartModems. The 336 only offers the one RJ-11 port at the rear, and no piggy-back phone cable means that no phone can be attached unless you have your own double adaptor. Both of the modems have a front panel which opens to expose the dip-switches and on the 336D this is where you find the Talk/Data mode button (it also exists on the 336 but does not operate anything).

The Netcomm Smartmodem 336 and 336D transferred files in basically the same time as each other. They are the same modem internally, except for the fact that one of them supports DSVD as well as being equipped with the latest in DSP chipset technology. The SmartModems DSP coupled with the Motorola CPU enable compression ratio's of up to 8:1, enabling the modems to transfer files at a potential 230k bps, or in simple term over a megabyte every minute.

NETCOMM MEMORYMODEM



This is yet another new innovation from Netcomm. This modem can be scheduled to operate without you being there, or alternatively you can leave the office and turn off your computer, and the modem will store any faxes that come when you (and your computer) are unavailable. This is the perfect modem for the Home Office, although the price tag is still in the elite range.

Connecting was not a problem with either of the hosts, and data transfers were efficient. It is hard to see that this modem has much more application than the unattended home office however - it does not offer SVD which for the price you would pay today for a MemoryModem you could get a SmartModem with DSVD.

SPIRIT COBRA 336 VOICE



Spirit modems have not been known to be the most aesthetically pleasing units, but the Cobra 336 changes all of that. This modem would be the one of the larger of the modems to grace my

com port, its wide appearance somewhat off-putting, but it does sit on the top of a mini tower without a problem, and the rubber feet ensures that it won't come crashing down. The drivers installed very easily and it comes with a comprehensive 100+ page manual, and a unique keyboard-style power-plug. If there was one complaint with this modem it is that the power switch on the back left was rather stiff and difficult to operate.

It did not hiccup when connecting to either modem, completing the connection in under 15 seconds. Its performance was acceptable although it didn't have a minor hiccup when receiving text from the Netcomm SmartModem. That minor stumble did very little to affect the overall results recorded. The Cobra comes with a 2 year warranty period which can be extended to 5 years.

US ROBOTICS COURIER V.EVERYTHING



The USR v.Everything modem is larger than life. The power-unit is massive, the manual is an epic and the modem itself is huge. In fairness, just like the Spirit Cobra, the modem will sit atop a mini-tower PC, or reside comfortably on a large desk, but it does need some space. All US Robotics modems come with QuickLink II fax and data software, and the V.Everything also contained a fold-out reference card and the standard D.I.Y. phone cable. One piece of paper caught my eye, an addendum notifying the user not to block the rather large air vent on the top of the unit. I was hoping that the grill was for a large speaker (it would look in place on the bonnet of a V8 Commodore), but this note would lead you to think that if this modem was left on for long periods of time then you might see some performance loss. The modem itself had a 'Voice Mode' button on the front panel, just beside a clearly marked and easy to read display, but the lack of markings on the back of the modem can cause confusion as to what port the phone line goes in, and what port the handset comes out. The under-side of the modem also listed some AT commands, a description of the LED's on the front panel, and a large slider to control the speaker volume manually.

US ROBOTICS SPORTSTER VOICE EXTERNAL



The Sportster comes in a small box, and when you withdraw the egg-carton packaging you are inundated with manuals, internet software and various loose papers. Nestled deep into the box is a small modem nesting on its RS-232 cable. In a fold-out section beside it you find a Do-It-Yourself phone cable (you simply need to lock the cable into the plug). The transformer is extremely large, and will prove cumbersome to most power-boards making the neighbouring sockets useless.

The modem itself is mid-small in size, and

had nothing to stop it from sliding around on the desk. The LED's on the front display were small and difficult to read when in use, but the clearly marked ports at the rear of the unit made for easy installation. The manual supplied was fairly limited, but contained everything you need to know when it comes to troubleshooting. The US Robotics modems are the only 2 in the range supplied not to be using one version or another of the Rockwell chipset, instead US Robotics use their own chips co-designed with Texas Instruments.

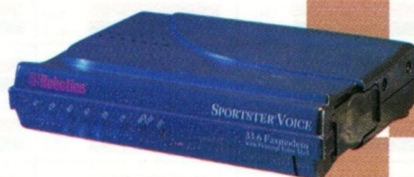
When it came to the crunch there were problems with both US Robotics modems. If the modem connected the first attempt, for some reason no data could be transmitted. Other times the modem would have to retrain 3 or 4 times in an attempt to connect at the right speed, which it did finally do after about 20-25 seconds. When files were transmitted during this connection they would transfer very slowly, and often encounter errors. I cannot say what this is due to, but I would say it is largely due to the different chipset internally. After some experimenting and eventually turning to the manual, I issued the initialisation string of `at&f1&d0` and it not only connected without any sign of the prior problems, but it also transferred data as well, if not a little better than most of the other modems. Needless to say there was no problem in getting the 2 supplied US Robotics modems to connect to each other 'out of the box', and when they did they transferred data at a very impressive rate.

US ROBOTICS WORLDPORT PCMCIA 28.8



The WorldPort is the other of the laptop modems supplied for testing. With the hindsight of the work done on the desktop modems, I knew what had to be done when the card faltered slightly during the connection phase. By issuing the same command (`at&f1&d0`) I was able to attain a steady connection, although the connect sequence was still not perfect. It comes complete with Quicklink II MessageCentre for Windows and a 200+ page manual. It also contained a PC card manager software disk. The fittings for the modem to connect to the phone line are a little bulky, and could break if pressure was applied in the wrong place.

Once connecting the modem performed up to standard, exceeding the 28.8k bps landmark set by the chip. Text was a little slower than the Hayes to transfer, but this was understandable under the test conditions. Unfortunately I was unable to test the WorldPort connecting to either the Sportster or the Courier. The WorldPort PCMCIA cardmodem can also be used with mobile phones, and is software upgradeable to greater speeds.



US Robotics Sportster Voice



US Robotics Worldport



US Robotics Courier v. Everything

The Final Word

The tests carried out highlighted a view held by many punters today - that there is no clear definition between any of the modems you can purchase. Excluding the Netcomm SmartModem range and the Hayes modems, the tests showed that there was a minimal difference between a Banksia MyFastModem and a Micronica Jumbuck SVD (considering 20-30 cps difference is at best a split second). It is also fair to say that some of the modems during the text transfer had not settled into a constant rhythm after sending or receiving 1 megabyte, a task which took at most 1:55 to complete. Taking that into account there would be a minimal average CPS change with a larger file. Calling any one of these modems a 'winner' is difficult, they are all full-featured, option packed and on the whole, very reliable. Obviously the SmartModems and the Hayes modems outperformed, but is the extra technology at this early stage (are we beyond comparing modem communications to 'first crackles of radio'?) worth the extra cost? The US Robotics modems performed as well, if not a little better than the others, but that was after time spent fiddling with initialisation strings which no one wants to do after purchasing a modem. US Robotics technical support is very helpful and open during office hours, but I have been assured that the hours will be increasing very soon. The Micronica Jumbuck is the cheapest SVD option, but the lack of driver disks and meaningful documentation was discouraging. In all, I would have to say that the overall better modem (in light of 'The Perfect Modem') among the group was the Banksia WaveSP. As SVD becomes a standard that is just about compulsory when purchasing a new modem, the WaveSP proved to be a solid package. It came complete with everything needed to get started and including a CD full of useful and interesting software. As usual, 'if' something were to go wrong with the product, Banksia provide a 5 year warranty period on parts and labour, and free technical support via their Sydney offices. The WaveSP may lack the grunt of the Hayes and Netcomm modems, but as an all-in-one kit of high-speed SVD modem, voice mail service, fax machine and full duplex speakerphone you cannot turn down the Banksia WaveSP. For those wanting a second opinion it would be the Hayes Accura MessageModem which performed superbly, or if you want to simply download data and don't necessarily want the SVD features present in the MessageModem, there is a Hayes Accura that does not support SVD for under \$200.








































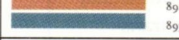





















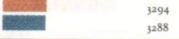






What Does the Future Hold?

Modem communication has come along way since the creation of the first modem in the late 1970's, and even in the last 5 years we have seen the 'standard' speed increase from 14.4kbps to 33.6kbps. Just days Netcomm ago Netcomm announced Monday 28th May to be the day they ship their first 56kbps modem using the US Robotics X2 technology. Upon speaking to US Robotics I am told that their 56k modems are imminent. Unlike previous modems (where if the speed increased you had to buy another modem), all modems purchased today are 56k upgradeable, but whether they are hardware (you send the modem back to the manufacturer) or software (you download a file that updates the modem) upgrades depends on the modem brand. One thing is for sure, if you jump in now there is a world to explore.

chart comparison continued over...

Performance vs Netcomm Smartmodem 336

Performance vs Hayes Optima Business Modem

Modem	Compressed File (1050k)		Text Document (1005k)		Voice
	Send	Receive	Send	Receive	
Netcomm Smartmodem 336					○ ○
Netcomm Smartmodem 336D					Digital Digital
Netcomm MemoryModem					○ ○
Netcomm Roadster Ultra SVD					● ●
Banksia WaveSP					● ●
Banksia MyFastModem					○ ○
Dynalink v1433VQE					● ●
Micronica 'Jumbuck'					● ●
Avtek MegaModem 336					○ ○
Spirit Cobra					● ●
Hayes Accura MessageModem*					●○ ●○
Hayes Optima Business Modem	TEST MODEM 3913	TEST MODEM 3913	TEST MODEM 10309	TEST MODEM 9932	●
USR Courier v. Everything**					● ●
USR Sportster 336 Voice**					● ●
GVC Teleport					○ ●
USR WorldPort PCMCIA**					○ ○
Hayes Accura PCMCIA					○ ○
Average CPS					○

* Hayes Accura is available both with and without Voice capability

** speeds attained using at&f1&d0 to initialise the modem

Note - No test was performed for the Hayes Optima BusinessModem 336 as it was the test subject. In the Netcomm comparison I was able to use a second SmartModem 336 that was supplied by Netcomm.

The test averages are not a major indicator as the majority of the modems did not compare in maximum speed to that of the Netcomm Smartmodems and the Hayes modems

Modem	Distributor	Phone	Fax	Technical Support	Support Hours	BBS	Internet
Netcomm Smartmodems	Netcomm Australia	02 9888 5533	02 9887 4274	1800 642 067	WD + Sat.	02 9878 3755	http://www.netcomm.com.au
Hayes Modems	Hayes	02 9959 5544	02 9959 5235	via main number	BH / WD	02 9959 5287	http://www.hayes.com
WaveSP/MyFastModem	Banksia	02 9418 8566	02 9418 8112	02 9418 8566	WD + Sat.	02 9418 7693	http://www.banksia.com.au
Jumbuck SAVD	Micronica	03 9699 8844	03 9690 5311	via main number	Customers only	(customers only)	http://www.micronica.com.au
Spirit Cobra	Mike Bourne Elect.	02 9906 6666	02 9906 7777	via main number **	BH / WD	n/a	http://www.spiritmodems.com.au
GVC Teleport	Lidcam	02 9922 7066	02 9922 7071	via main number	BH / WD	n/a	http://www.globalvillage.com
Sportster/Courier	US Robotics	03 9934 8888	03 9329 7976	1800 628 324	BH / WD	Not yet online	http://www.usr.com.au
V1433VQE	Askey Australia	1 800 357 253	1800 063 962	1800 653 962	BH / WD	n/a	http://www.dynalink.com.au
Avtek MegaModem	Avtek Data Comms.	02 9888 5333	02 9878 7478	9878 7473	WD + Sat.		http://www.avtek.com.au

WD - Weekdays

WD+Sat - Weekdays plus limited Saturday hours BH - Business hours

* Soon to be including limited Weekend support

** Dick Smith Customers call Dick Smith support



Put your friends in their place.

Why play against a computer when you've got so many friends with real scores to settle?

Multiplay is Australia's ultimate dedicated games network that lets you take on a multitude of players in the ultimate games. Quake, Diablo, Red Alert, POD, Interstate '76, Duke Nukem 3D and more - you haven't played any of them until you've Multiplayed them.

For a flat fee of \$29.95 per month you can now engage in unlimited Multiplay.

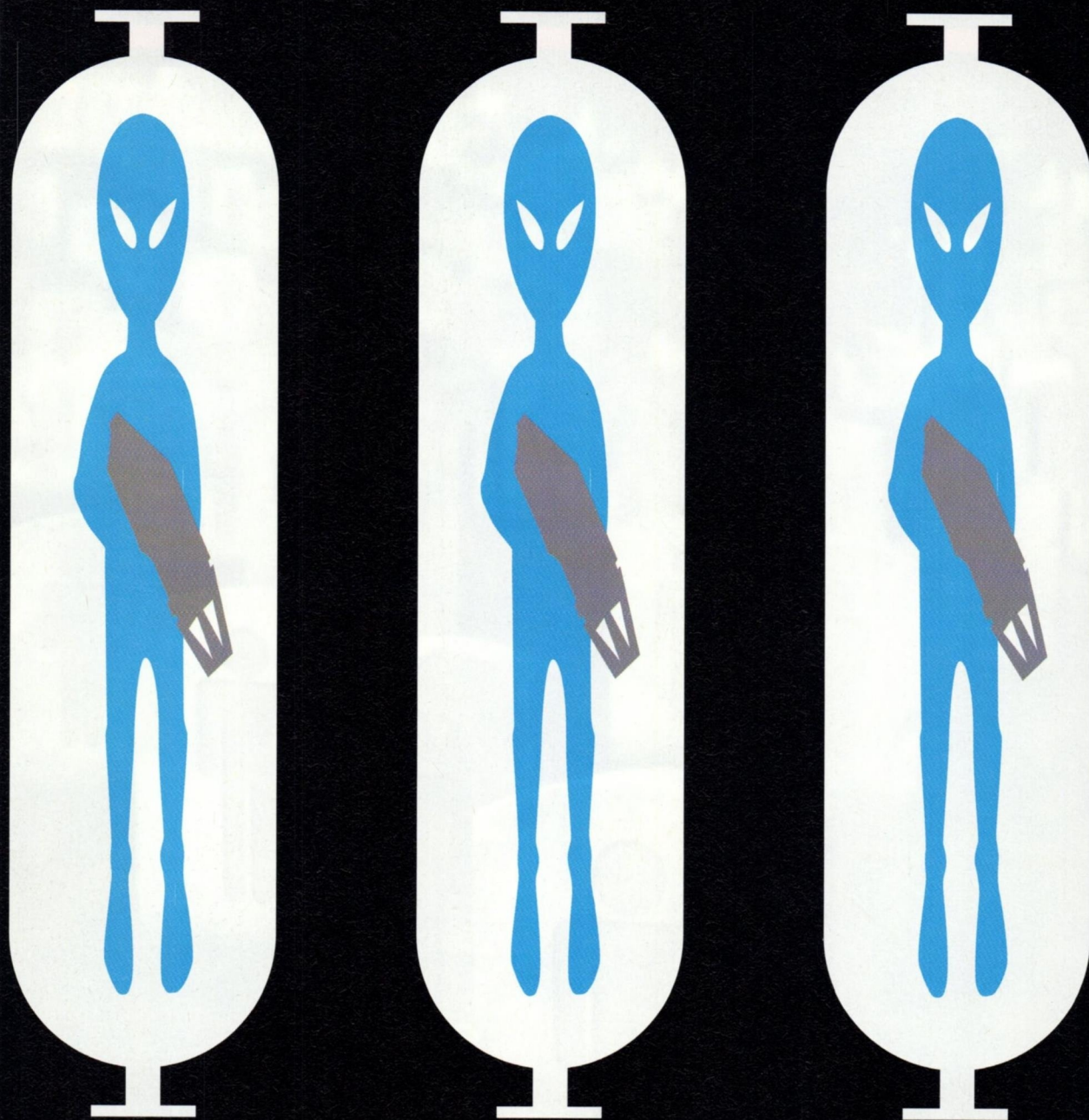
From June 1st to August 30th, every Multiplayer has a chance

to win \$20 000 worth of state-of-the-art computer hardware, games and music. There are also loads of T-shirts, caps, movie passes and ARL tickets to be won.

So call 1800 359 200 to register, and start playing the games you love against people you don't.

Multiplay Dedicated Games Network.



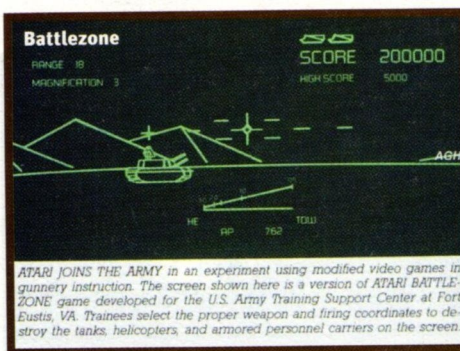


More than just a

DOOM CLONE

1st-person action gaming - past, present and FUTURE

by Simon "Groo" Gruer



When it comes to a feeling of total immersion whilst playing a game on your PC, nothing is quite as engrossing as a good 1st person game. The term "1st person" is derived from 1st person perspective, where the display is taken from the players point of view (Doom, Quake, etc.) in a 3D environment. You may have heard of "3rd person" games, this is where the point of view is taken from behind the player in the game (Fade to Black and Tomb Raider

hit that the US Army had a special training version developed for their tank troops in 1981.

Wolfenstein & Doom

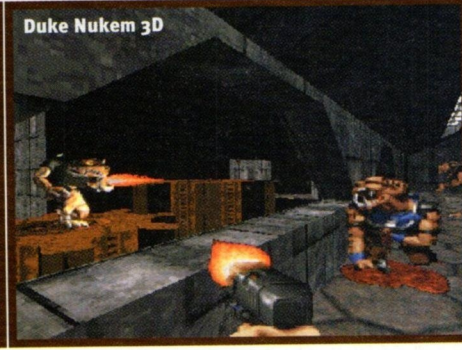
Many games have since used primitive 1st person perspective but none quite as ground breaking as ID Software's first hit, Wolfenstein 3D. With its impressive 3D engine and its addictive gameplay, Wolfenstein 3D was the shape of things to come. To date nothing has been quite as ground breaking as the second release for ID software, Doom. Released in

"Doom clones" sprung up overnight as did many poor attempts at the 1st person genre. Dark Forces by LucasArts is arguably the best of the first generation of Doom clones. Enriched by the Star Wars universe, Dark Forces showed many enhancements over Doom; crouching, jumping and the ability to look up and down to name a few. Its greatest let down was the lack of multiplayer mode which never made it into the final release and ultimately halved its lastability.

even watch peep shows in an adult bookshop! No one had ever seen a game like this before, that was when Quake came along.

And then there's Quake...

Developed by the authors of Wolfenstein and Doom, Quake has gone and revolutionized the gaming world as its predecessors had done years before. In the short time that Quake has been released, it has proved itself to be the benchmark by which all other 1st person games are judged. Where Doom and Duke have relied on a games



are some examples). Any game that takes place from the players point of view can fall into the category of 1st person (flight sims, driving games, etc), but the real fun begins with 1st person action games.

In the beginning

The history of 1st person games goes back further than you may think. One of the earliest examples is "Battlezone", a first person tank game release in 1980 by Atari. Battlezone is also one of the first true 3D games, using crude 3D vectors for its display. It was such a

1993, Doom sparked a revolution in the games industry for its slick design and advanced features. It was one of the first networkable multiplayer games where up to 4 players could stalk demons together, or stalk each other ;-). Doom 2 was released shortly after to an eager audience. It was considered by most to be a letdown, as it was mostly cosmetic changes to the original Doom (a few new monsters and weapons).

As time went by, the success of Doom was used as a formula for other software houses. The term

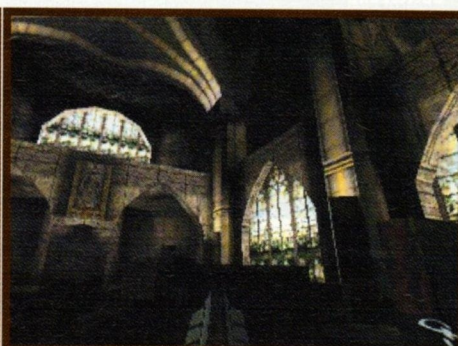
1st Person Games Today

1996 was the year that saw 1st person gaming mature to the next level of PC gaming. With the advent of Pentium Processors, windows 95 and 3D accelerators, the PC is now a gaming platform in its own right. We saw the release of the "first true Doom beater", Duke Nukem 3D. Boasting depth never seen in a video game before, Duke Nukem 3D took 1st person gaming to the limits. You could interact with almost everything in the games' environment, turn the lights on and off, play a game of pool in a bar,

engine that simulates 3D (the levels are created from 2D maps), Quake uses an engine that creates a much more convincing 3D landscape. Quake replaces the hand-drawn sprites as used in Doom with elaborate 3D characters and objects. Quake goes much deeper than its good looks, it even comes complete with its own programming language, Quake C.

Quake C allows users with some knowledge of programming to manipulate and change the game in almost anyway they want. With Quake C you can create new





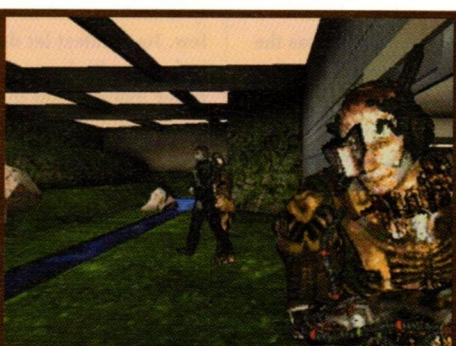
Hexen 2, just around the corner and looking amazing

weapons, change the behaviour of the monsters, even create your own vehicles to ride on. If you have access to the internet you can download some examples of Quake C that people from all over the world have done. One of the

Quake is indeed the biggest 1st person game around right now, and other software houses know it. The Quake engine has been licensed out to no less than six developers - including Raven for the soon to be released Hexen 2 and 3D Realms for

generation 1st person games will use them to their full potential. The future does look bright for 1st person games, here's a run-down of some games to look out for in the near future:

Hexen 2 will include 4 distinctive character classes: Paladin, Necromancer, Crusader and Assassin (this will be a female character). It will also use features seen in the original Hexen, like the hub system, where you can



Star Trek: First Contact uses a licensed version of the much-touted Unreal engine

most awesome uses of Quake C is the soon to be released "Quake Rally". Developed right here in Australia, Quake Rally promises to turn Quake as we know it into a totally new game, putting you behind the wheel of a customised rally car.

their next instalment in the Duke Nukem saga, Duke Nukem Forever.

THE FUTURE

This coming year promises to be big for 1st person games. With 3D accelerators quickly becoming mainstream, most of the next

Hexen 2

In a few months we should see the release of the first game to use the "enhanced" Quake engine, Hexen 2. Utilising enhancements such as translucent polygons and rotating brushes, Hexen 2 looks like a real winner.

backtrack through previously explored levels. And of course, it will offer the same depth and flexibility that Quake has offered via Quake C (or will it be Hexen C?), not to mention the fact that you will be able to play with at least 16 people via the internet or LAN.

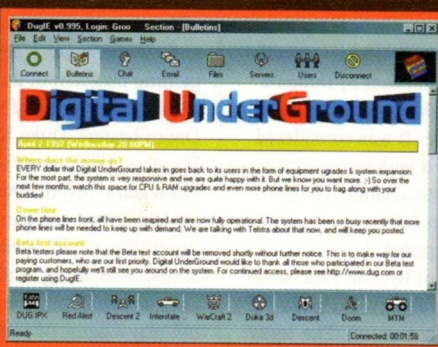
Multiplayer gaming

Doom started a trend with multiplayer 1st person gaming, giving players a chance to test their skills with up to 4 players via LAN. Now with the Internet and multiplayer games servers connecting players from all over the world, now is the time to get into multiplayer gaming. Quake has lead the way with multiplayer gaming utilising a revolutionary client/server system. Where games like Duke Nukem 3D require an exact number of players to form a game, Quake lets players join and leave established games whenever they like. Quake has also maximised the amount of players that can be in a multiplayer game. Specifically designed with the Internet in mind, QuakeWorld can support up to an amazing 32 players at a time!

Future games such as Unreal and Jedi Knight promise to have a similar multiplayer system.

Playing over the Internet

If you have a good connection to the Internet, then you can start playing multiplayer games. If you have Quake, you can use a utility called QSpy, a program used to



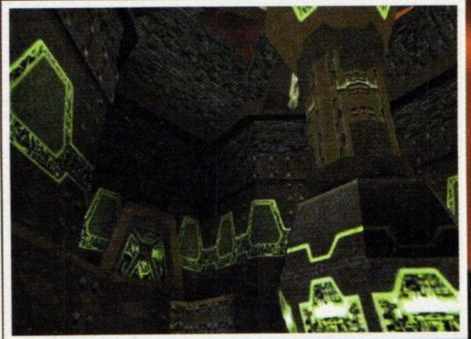
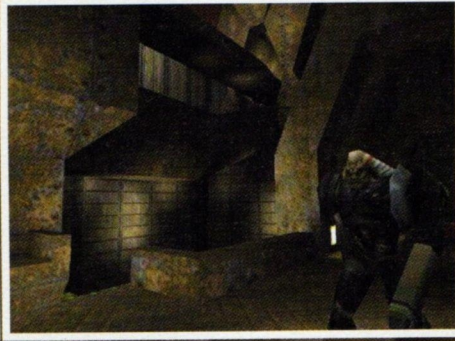
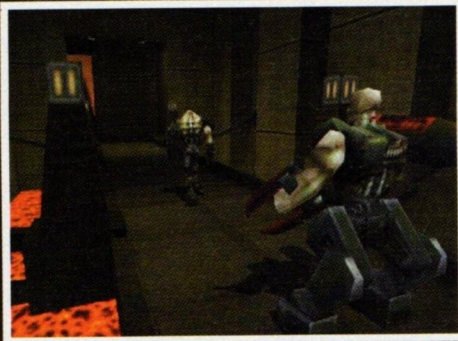
find Quake servers on the Internet. You can also play some of the older favourites such as Doom 1 & 2, but you will need a utility to simulate a LAN network. Kali is a utility specifically designed for playing multiplayer games over the Internet. When you connect to a Kali server you can organise games with other players currently on the same server. Although it can be a lot of fun, playing games over the Internet can be sometimes very slow because of the amount of information that 1st person games send and receive.

Local game servers

A new alternative to playing over the Internet are local games servers where you dial directly into a dedicated games network. These servers have the advantage of fast and reliable gameplay and are a great place to meet lots of new people. One such games server is Digital Underground (DUG), based in the Sydney area. You dial in to the DUG network with a handy client program called the Digital UnderGround Interactive Explorer (DugIE). This client program lets you navigate the network with ease and lets you chat with other users, download files, send email and much more. In the coming months we should see a lot of local servers like this one popping up all over Australia, they are the future of multiplayer gaming.

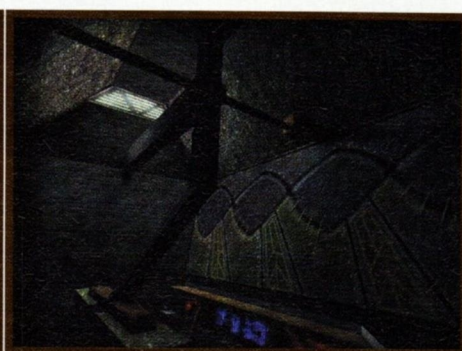
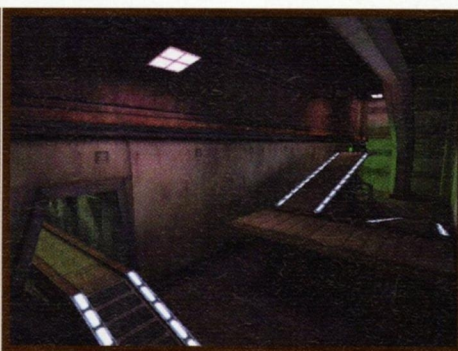
Related Internet links:

<http://www.quakespy.com>
<http://www.kali.net>
<http://www.dug.com>
<http://www.stargatenetworks.com>
<http://www.multiplay.com.au>



This is Quake 2. ID showed their lax attitude to sequels with Doom 2, let's hope Quake 2 is more than just another mission pack





3D Realms' forthcoming game, Prey, will utilise ID Software's Quake 2 engine. A late 1998 release is scheduled

Unreal

No other 1st person game (with the exception of Quake) has generated as much hype and excitement as Unreal, the soon to be released 1st person shooter from Epic Megagames. Unreal promises to be leaps and bounds ahead of

Unreal will use motion capture techniques on its characters and monsters creating a more fluid, lifelike effect. Even though the game is not yet completed (the developers aim for a September 97 release date), the Unreal engine has already been licensed to

Prey & Duke Nukem Forever

There is not too much information on this next generation 1st person game by the makers of Duke Nukem 3D, but like most software developers, 3D Realms have a lot of faith in their product. As the story goes, you are Talon Brave, a full

With 3D Realms developing Prey as their next "big thing" in the 1st person games scene, it came as quite a shock when they announced that the up coming sequel to Duke Nukem 3D will be developed using ID software's Quake 2 engine. Why did they use another company's 3D



Unreal has already been called a Quake Killer, and it looks like that might be the case, in the graphics area, anyway

Quake in the graphics department. Where the lighting in Quake levels is pre-calculated, Unreal boasts true multicoloured light sourcing. Even though the characters in Quake are 3D, they still have individual animated frames not unlike the hand drawn sprites of Doom,

Microprose for their upcoming 1st person adventure "Star Trek: First Contact". Unreal has certainly made a few waves in the 3D gaming community, boasting to be the first real "Quake Killer" is a bold statement, time will tell if this turns out to be true.

blooded American Indian who is sucked into a science fiction adventure of galactic proportions (their words, not mine!). The proposed specs on Prey are quite handsome, 16bit colour, full radiosity lighting and 3DRealms own "Portal Technology" engine.

engine when they are in the middle of completing their own? Head of 3D Realms, George Broussard, responds: "It's a very good question, but we have a very good answer. Our Prey technology is predicated on 3D hardware, such as the 3DFX card and the Rendition card. Prey will not

3D accelerators

With 1st person games now starting to use cutting edge 3D technology, most of these games will utilise a piece of hardware that is set to become commonplace in all PC's, 3D accelerators. These powerful pieces of hardware can turn supported games (like Quake) into an amazing visual experience. Currently there are two major 3D chipsets commonly used in the most popular 3D cards, Verite and 3Dfx. Both offer advanced 3D features like anti-aliasing, Z-buffering and bi-linear filtering which can only be done efficiently with the use of 3D accelerators.

Quake in overdrive

Although there are many games that have utilised 3D accelerators already, none are quite as impressive as Quake. Verite Quake (as used by the 3D Blaster card) was the first 3D accelerated version of Quake. Verite Quake accelerates Quake considerably and removes jagged edges and pixeli-



caption

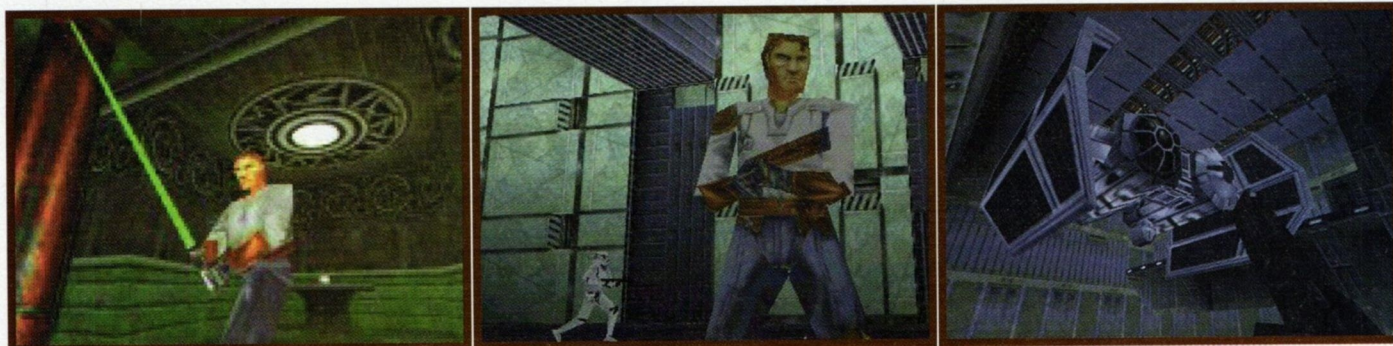
sation via anti-aliasing. The 3Dfx chipset (as used by the Monster3D and Righteous3D cards) uses OpenGL to enhance Quake and has even more features that Verite Quake. GLQuake (as it's commonly known) supports effects like transparent water, dynamic shadows and coloured lighting all of which can be turned on and off via the console. Quake is definitely seen at its best while played on a 3D accelerator.

Next generation 3D

3D accelerators are set to become compulsory with new 1st person games widely supporting them. Almost all of the soon to be released 1st person games support 3D acceleration. Prey, the next big game from 3D Realms will be a "3Dfx only" game, demonstrating the faith 3D Realms has in 3D accelerators. A number of hardware vendors have started to develop and release their own 3D cards. NEC have entered the market their Apocalypse 3D, using the Power VR chipset. With all these new cards using different 3D technology it's hard to choose which one is best, only time will tell which one of these cards will be a worthy addition to your computer system.

Related Internet links:

<http://www.3dfx.com>
<http://www.creative.com>
<http://www.cam.org/~agena/glquake.html>



Jedi Knight sees the player using the Force, just like Luke Skywalker. Hopefully his haircut isn't a Jedi standard

work without the current best 3D cards on the market. When Prey is released late in 1998 only then do we believe there will be enough of an installed base to support sales of a high-end 3D hardware game."

Jedi Knight: Dark Forces 2

When it was released almost 2 years ago, Dark Forces gave gamers a chance to battle against the Empire and a host of characters as seen in the Star Wars films. Its' biggest criticism was the absence of multiplayer mode, which marred its lastability. This year will see the arrival of what could possibly be the most popular game of 1997, Jedi Knight: Dark Forces 2. Reprising the role of Imperial defector Kyle Katarn, play-

ers will now have to learn the ways of the Force in order to stop a powerful Dark Jedi named Jerec and his six minions. As Katarn learns the arts of the Jedi - including levitating objects, acrobatics, seeing through walls, healing and, most importantly, the use of a lightsaber - he will have to decide which side of the Force to lend his powers. With an engrossing story line, a 3D engine to rival Quake, 8 player network and of course the Star Wars universe, this looks like the game that just might knock Quake off its high pedestal.

Quake 2

ID Software have proved themselves to be the undisputed king of 1st person games, a title that they

have kept since their first game, Wolfenstein 3D. With Quake already proving itself to be one of the biggest PC games of all time, the sequel will have to be something special. ID are keeping very tight lipped about exactly what will set the sequel apart from its predecessor, but it seems it will be more of a sequel than Doom 2 was to doom. Thanks to technology learned from the development of Quake, Quake 2 will have an even more realistic feel and look about it incorporating improved lighting techniques. From the level of depth displayed in the few screenshots that have been released and software houses already licensing the Quake 2 technology even before it's fully completed, it

looks like ID will be able to keep their crown. Rumours say there will be no shareware version, but we can look forward to a December 1997 release. I know what I'll be asking Santa for this Christmas! :-)

View to a kill

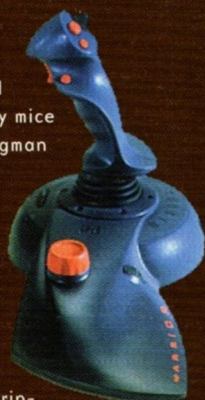
As you can see, 1st person games are quickly earning the reputation as being one of the most popular forms of computer games today, and rightfully so. Nothing is more challenging and exciting than playing a game taken from the point of view of the player, and with so many new titles to look forward to it's obvious that this is the type of game that people will be playing into the next century, and beyond.

Navigation in a 3D world

Back in the good olde days of Doom (well, it seems a long time ago) the standard method of control was simply to use the keyboard, which was fine considering the limited number of controls. Now as next generation games like Quake and Duke Nukem 3D give much more freedom of movement (the ability to jump, look up and down, etc) the humble keyboard just isn't dynamic enough to move around efficiently in a 3D world. The revolution of 1st person games has spawned a number of new and innovative joysticks and controllers to help us navigate 3D environments. Here are just a few controllers to get to grips with:

Wingman Warrior

Made by Logitech, a hardware company well known for their quality mice and joysticks, the Wingman Warrior is a formidable controller. Looking like a standard flight sim joystick, it claims to be the first controller specifically designed with 1st person games in mind. With your right hand gripping the joystick, your left hand is used to twist a large red knob and a smaller grey dial. Aptly named Logitech Spin Control,



this spinning red knob gives you greater control in a 3D environment than a standard joystick. Overall the Wingman Warrior is a very good controller, the only downside is you can only grip the joystick with your right hand (which is a bummer for lefties, like me).

SideWinder 3D Pro

Microsoft, better known for software, recently entered the game controller market with their series of "Sidewinder" controllers. The SideWinder 3D Pro is well suited for flight sim type games but its advanced features make it appealing for use with 1st person games as well. The stick itself twists left and right (perfect for strafing) and it comes with its own throttle control on the base. Not only does it have a 4-way hat switch and four fire buttons on the stick, but it has an extra four programable buttons on the base. If you're looking for a good all-round joystick with 1st person games in mind, you can't go far wrong with the SideWinder 3D Pro.

Space0rb 360

This has to be one of the most innovative game controllers ever created for the PC. Designed by Spacetec, a company that develops 3D navigation tools for high end CAD users, the Space0rb 360 is the perfect controller for use with 1st person games. Sporting a unique "powersensor" orb that can be pushed, pulled and twisted; it also



has six buttons and software to make it programmable. Because of its revolutionary design, it takes a little while to get the hang of. If you want to go forward, you push the ball forward, if you want to turn left, you twist the ball left, and so on. The only real drawbacks is the fact that it requires its own serial port but overall it is one of the best 3D controllers on the market.

The cheap alternative

If a new joystick is a little too expensive or you just can't decide which one to buy, you just can't go past a keyboard and mouse combination. You can use your mouse to turn left and right and look up and down while using the keyboard to move forward and backward and strafe from side to side. 1st person games such as Duke Nukem 3D or Quake are perfect for controlling with a mouse and keyboard combination. So if you want to save money, try out your humble mouse as your controller of choice before you consider buying a new controller.

Related Internet links:

<http://www.logitech.com>
<http://www.microsoft.com>
http://www.spacetec.com/WEB_SITE/PRODUCTS/360/frames.html



3D technews

This month in 3D technews there's more hardware to contend with than ever before. It's actually starting to look like there are more 3D accelerators and enhancements to existing accelerators out there than there are titles for them. Which actually might just be the truth!

The latest report from JPA (a market research and publishing firm tracking digital media technologies) has shown that the 3D Market is the fastest growing segment in semiconductor industry, with over 150% growth expected in 1997.

Now everyone wants one...

At the recent Computer Game Developer's Conference in Santa Clara, JPA announced that it predicts 42 million 3D graphics chips will ship into the PC market in 1997, up from nearly 16 million chips in 1996. Report findings suggest that at current projected growth rates, the 3D market will double in 1998 to over 80 million chips, and by 2000 the number will be over 140 million.

Total 3D Desktop Chip Shipments

Year	Millions of 3D graphics chips
1996	15
1997	42
1998	82
1999	114
2000	142

JPA continued to say that manufacturers are driving technology up, and prices down very quickly because the stakes are so high. In a couple of years 3D graphics will be as ubiquitous as 2D and colour is today, and no chip vendor wants to miss out on having a piece of this market.

The study also stated that 3D graphics chips are the fastest growing market segment in the PC business. But hey, even without a study, we've been telling you that here at PC PowerPlay for the last 10 months...

PC games for \$1 a pop

So, where does all this new Intel grunt go? Surprisingly into, wait for it... arcade machines! Intel have

announced a hardware specification for coin-operated video games based on the Pentium II processor.

Intel P2 arcade machines will utilise open architecture PCs that enhance the arcade experience with new features such as multi-player interaction and Internet access. Games in the running so far include Home Run Derby, a baseball simulation, Canyon Runner, a multiplayer race game with futuristic, armed aircraft, and a flight simulator.

By writing for the Intel Architecture-based platform, developers may create games for arcades with the knowledge that similar performance levels will later be available in home computers. This opportunity encourages creative, new types of games and eliminates the crappy arcade conversion blues.

With the P2 accelerated Graphics Port and advanced 3D graphics controllers, the Intel Architecture PC will deliver the 3D, graphics and video performance that players expect in an arcade game. We translated that to mean: "We're actually just sticking a 3Dfx into a P2 PC and drilling a coin slot in it".

Coin-operated systems based on the P2 are expected to be in arcades by the end of the year.



Intel approves ATI 3D RAGE PRO for Pentium II

Just when you thought nothing more could possibly be happening for the Pentium II, ATI Technologies have optimised the 3D RAGE PRO graphics accelerator chips for said processor. A massive feather in their caps, Intel announced that the 3D RAGE PRO

is the ideal complement for Pentium II systems as the increase in processor power will automatically increase the graphics performance of 3D RAGE PRO boards and chips.

The Pentium II/3D RAGE PRO will allegedly rival workstation-class computing resulting in the fastest 2D, highest 3D performance, and best video acceleration. These are bold claims indeed and ones PowerPlay will look forward to proving/disproving.

The 3D RAGE PRO with the Pentium II MMX will support DVD multimedia and visual display. Utilising an on-chip motion compensation accelerator, DVD/MPEG 2 frame rate will improve by 30%, removing the need to buy expensive hardware for MPEG-2 and DVD playback.

Permedia GLINT MX - 3D accelerator supreme

For the TRUE 3D aficionado out there, a new high-end member of the GLINT family has become available called the GLINT MX. Designed to take advantage of the

Pentium II vendors of the chip include Diamond Multimedia, ELSA, Omnicomp Graphics Corporation, Radius and Symmetric (an STB Company).

This truly amazing piece of 3D hardware, being fully scalable, allows up to eight GLINT MX

processors to be used in parallel to provide some of the fastest rasterisation performance available on the PC platform today. For example, a twin GLINT MX board can display up to 2 million "visible polygons per second" and provides a texturing rate of up to 55 million pixels per second with full per-pixel mip-mapping and high quality texture filtering.

But if you thought that was amaz-



ing, the GLINT MX supports up to 70Mbytes of texture and framebuffer memory, allowing board designers to support extremely high-resolution, true-colour displays providing high-capacity on-board texture storage. Designs containing 16Mbytes of framebuffer memory allow 32 bit true-colour and double-buffered displays up to a resolution of 1600x1200.

But wait, there's more. The chipset also supports HDTV resolution displays that run at a horizontal resolution of 1920 pixels within a linear framebuffer. The GLINT MX-based boards are the only professional 3D processor on the PC that can drive the new generation of high-resolution HDTV displays. Someone bring me some water, I feel faint!

GLINT MX-based boards and systems are expected to start shipping in volume in the second half of 1997.

Voodoo Rush available now

Here at the offices of PC PowerPlay we have finally replaced our much beloved 3D Blaster with a more practical card. The Hercules Stingray 128/3D is a 128-bit 2D/3D graphics and multimedia accelerator combining three high performance graphics processors on a single board.

The Hercules Stingray 128/3D combines Alliance Semiconductor's and the 3Dfx Voodoo Rush chip onto an excellently designed Hercules' board. By integrating the 128-bit Alliance ProMotion AT3D 2D/3D graphics and multimedia processor with the 3Dfx Voodoo Rush and 6MB of EDO DRAM is a single slot solution, the Hercules Stingray 128/3D gives us back a well needed PCI slot.



The Hercules Stingray 128/3D also supports an advanced set of video acceleration features in hardware, including YUV/RGB colour space conversion, scaling, and a 64 step bilinear filter with full line buffer to provide exceptionally crisp, smoothly filtered, 30 fps full-screen/full-motion video playback.

Take careful note, a 64 step bilinear filter for video is not possible on a standard 3Dfx. Hercules however have managed to successfully not only combine technologies from both chipsets on their card, but to also utilise the additional functions of a standard MMX PC, not a P2 like the ATI. The optimised software MPEG player that ships with the card will support MPEG-1 and MPEG-2 DVD playback.

Special mention must be made of the card's installation routine - this is possibly the easiest video in the known universe to install! We put the card in its slot, inserted the Hercules CD when prompted and that was it. Everything - utilities, DirectX - the lot, installed seamlessly and we didn't even have to press ENTER once. Beautiful.

PowerVR 2

As we reported last month, VideoLogic announced the imminent release of the new NEC Power VR 2 called the 3Dx. The Power VR 1 was proven faster than the 3Dfx, but without bi-linear filtering was largely ignored by buyers. The new Power VR 2 however, will feature everything the 3Dfx can do, plus a number of new and exciting features.

Videologic realising they have a 3Dfx killer on their hands are now offering to upgrade any 3Dfx Voodoo owner to a VideoLogic Apocalypse 3Dx for only US \$130. We never said the 3D accelerator business wouldn't get nasty. Of

course, we're of the opinion that the Power VR, being versatile enough to run with any other 3D accelerator, would be fine to be used in tandem with your 3Dfx. Keep reading for a review of the Power VR 2 soon!

Software

Tomb Raider for the Mystique

Although a little late, Matrox have announced a new software patch which provides Mystique 3D hardware acceleration for Eidos Interactive's Tomb Raider. The patch for the retail product is now available for free download on the Matrox Graphics web site (www.matrox.com), 3D Gaming section.

Rated one of the hottest 3D titles of the year, Matrox believe the Mystique enhanced Tomb Raider's is the bees knees. Not featuring bilinear filtering, it does however get up to 30 frames per second at 640 x 480 with higher res textures.

Goman

Goman, a new D3D title from lesser known company Tek-47 has just been released as a demo. Although the complete game won't be ready for a while, the taste we've had here does make for something to definitely look forward to.

Goman allows every Manga fan to live out their every fantasy. Well ok, not every fantasy, but if a big bulky versatile super powerful robotech is your kind of thing, then this is THE game.

You take control of Goman, a famous Japanese manga character from the comic of ummm, Goman??? Anyway, your job is to protect a city from Godzilla style monsters by direct confrontation. Totally cool features include a population counter. If you aren't

watching what your doing and take your fight into the city, not only will the monster walk through and topple buildings, but if you're knocked back, your own impact will destroy buildings as well. The more destruction, the more population dies. Too few people and you lose!

This games perfectly represents the battles as portrayed in Manga cartoons such as Robotech. Within the great mechanical sentry, you can fly forward, jump incredibly high, use side rockets to strafe left and right, spin and crouch into a totally cool martial arts position. Attack with helmet lasers, plasma shurikens giant plasma swords, shields or a massive energy blast. For the ultimate manga experience, jump in the air spin around and as your coming down on the victim unleash the plasma sword to dice him into monster mince.

3Dfx, Rendition and Power VR 2 players will be treated to a truly visual feast as high res 640x480 graphics run at about 20 fps and all the weapon and jet effects are rendered in a beautifully transparent glowing effect like in Wipeout 2097.

Flying Nightmares 2

There's one thing that just screams out for 3D accelerated technology: Flight sims! To date however, except for the elusive "we're only including it in EF2000 V2.0 now" EF2000 graphics+ patch and the even more elusive "is it really going to happen" Jet Fighter 3 patch, nothing has been done.

Thank the heavens then for Eidos interactive (the people who made the awesome Tomb Raider), because Flying Nightmares 2 is coming and NOTHING can prepare you for the awesomeness of this game.

It's essentially the continuation of the very popular Harrier AV-8B simulation, but now you get to choose between an AV-8B 2+ or a Cobra chopper. With support for the 3Dfx and Rendition based cards (as well as the other cards supported by Tomb Raider), nothing can compare you for the level of graphical detail this game offers. Just take a look at the screen-shots!

Features of the game include Virtual Cockpits, 16-bit (65,000-color) high-resolution texture-

mapped graphics. TCP/IP networking allowing Macs and PCs to hook up in multiplayer games. The multiplayer capabilities however are one of the biggest surprises.

Each team has one designated Team Commandant responsible for placement and direction of "Non-Player" units, and overall conduct of the battle in a style exact to C&C. The other "Pilot Players" participate in the battle primarily from the cockpits of their assigned aircraft, as they receive orders from Team Commandants from a first-person perspective and watch the NPU's duke it out around them.

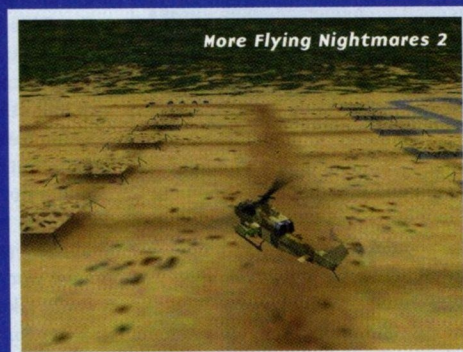
From the Ready Room, each Team Commandant views a real-time overhead map of the battle-field, seeing the engagement unfold as each unit detects and engages the enemy forces. The radio dialogue box shows colour-coded messages from the "Non-Player" units, as well as communication from the "Pilot Players" currently flying aircraft. Every unit can be selected and assigned destinations, targets, or dispositions with a few simple mouse clicks.

Other Players not currently flying aircraft can also view the battle from the Ready Room, scanning the battlefield for targets and helping the Team Commandant keep the situation under control.

The Team Commandant can issue orders to "airborne" players with simple mouse clicks, or verbose text messages. Navigation routes can be entered and changed in real-time, and "warnings" can be issued quickly when an unexpected contingency arises.

Other options include camouflage, ground units that can hide and entrench, Calling up reinforcements, or capturing enemy airfields (complete with their aircraft and supplies). Full internet, allowing FN2 players from around the world to join your Team. Send your friends on suicide missions against impossible odds!

Jere Lawrence





This technology has obvious drawbacks - a phone's anonymity can be advantageous

like pipes filling with water to their limits until eventually everyone only gets a trickle. This is the bandwidth problem, it's quite a big one at that.

Which leads to the ultimate question. With a global network



to traverse the globe, be replied to, and return again.

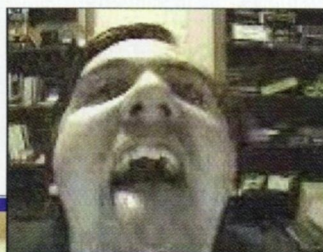
Email was and is a perfectly acceptable way to converse quickly and effectively with an



HOME VIDEO CONFERENCING

The Internet is a strange, strange beast indeed. Here at our finger tips lies one of the most powerful computer structures mankind has ever built. Machines, from around the world, connected by powerful digital links allowing masses of data to find their way across oceans and land to any destination. Most likely your home.

It is truly amazing to this writer that the common man on the street has embraced this technology so. Let's face it, our small unlimited access ISP and 28.8 modems barely pull the data in fast enough. Like never before, we sit and wait patiently for the data to come in... painfully slowly.



struggling to feed data to the individuals that use it, why do companies keep on spending so much

money developing data-intensive applications that just make everything so much slower?

The best answer is faith. They're developing for the future. Right now, so few of us have the equipment that can effectively utilise the power that these applications have to offer. For that reason, we're going to take a serious and realistic look at communications across the Internet.

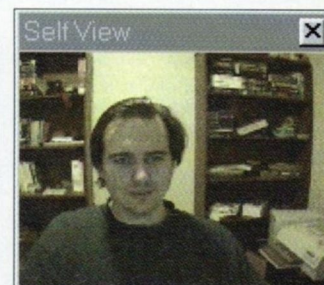
Virtual CB radio

In the beginning there was Usenet. Newsgroups to most. This text based means of communication is still one of the most popular forms of interaction on the net. It's not immediate. When people post their messages for the world to see, it could take as long as a day for the data

individual, but that's the problem. Only with an individual. The first program to ever address live real time global conversations was IRC - Internet Relay chat.

This system involved people from all around the world connecting to a common server where individuals would input their statements and it would be echoed to thousands in real time across the planet. It was live, it was fast, it was exciting, it allowed individuals to carry on conversations and romances in real time, it was text based.

The Net knew its limitations, modems that link millions of users slowly exhaust its resources. Text is fast and efficient, but not necessarily human. For decades we'd had phones that allowed fast full duplex audio conversation, but now we had regressed back to a



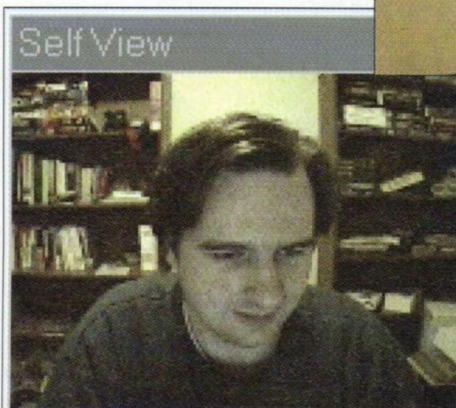
typed form of communication. Better than morse code, yet still strangely similar.

With the ability to create so easily on a computer, new software is only a matter of a clever indi-



#1 Need: Bandwidth

In a humorous twist of irony, it is the popularity that cripples the speed. As people login to experience the Net, most likely the Web, the data they pull pushes the links,



viduals time and effort. The Net, being a haven for the computer elite, allows university students and the inventive to collectively share their knowledge and create together. Thus, applications are born that try and echo, indeed advance what we use in the analogue world. But is it practical?

This expensive & complex technology is also excellent if you forget what you look like

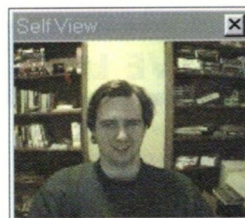
Mirabilis ICQ

Before we step out onto the brave new frontier that is digital audio and video communications across the Net. The first real problem that many address is "How do I find someone to talk to?", or "How do



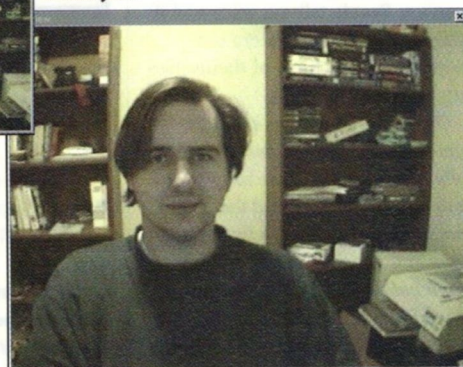
munications programs such as Iphone, Netmeeting, CuSeeme, Webphone and many others. What this

means is that when you login, if there is a friend of yours online that you wish to contact, you need only click his name and request the type of communication. The program on



Heere's Jere!
Smile Jere

must first circumnavigate the world 10 times before reaching its destination. This makes for a strange delay between the originators sentence



IS THE FUTURE HERE ALREADY?



I know when I can talk to a friend of mine?"

An annoying reality about the Net is that when you want to speak to a friend. If they're in the same city, you generally find yourself ringing them on a conventional phone, asking if they want to "chat", hanging up and calling them across the Net. Practical huh?

A very, very clever program indeed has addressed this problem beautifully. Called ICQ by the Mirabilis company, it allows you to search for people by their first and last name. When you find someone that you know, you add them to your personal list. Now, whenever they login you get an audio alarm and at a glance, you can see who is and who isn't on.

Easily the most useful piece of software on the Net yet, it even has embedding for external digital com-

your end will launch and at the other parties approval, start the same application. Voila, communication has started very easily.

Iphone

This is the program that started it all.

Essentially the first program to allow vocal communications across the Net, it came out when 14.4 modems were still the go. It was revolutionary, unique and initiated promise for the future. As an application, at version 4 Iphone is a swish product indeed.

Iphone does definitely allow for voice communication to occur over the Net. But not like a phone. The first obstacle that has to be addressed is that unless both parties have a full duplex sound card, only one person can speak at a time. Just like a CB radio. It hardly makes for a

flowing conversation.

There's also a certain delay as the packets make their way from source to destination. The Internet unwritten IP rules apply here as well. You know the one (tongue firmly in cheek), that an IP packet

and your answer.

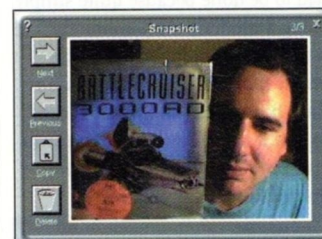
There are also a few more obstacles to overcome. Iphone streams its data to the recipient. It's the only way something as intensive as vocal communications can be dealt

with. What this means is that if you have an Internet connection that is prone to packet loss, the person's voice will come in scratchy at first and ultimately

with entire gaps missing from it. There's no solution to this either, except to get a better ISP.

But it's not all doom and gloom. There are some definite advantages to Iphone as well. The first one of course is the cost. If you have an unlimited access ISP, you can call anyone in the world for the cost of a local call. Any relative or friend overseas with just a computer and an ISP you can talk to for as long as you like. Let's see Telstra and Optus match that.

Finally, Iphone is a rather social program as well. Whenever you start the program, the first thing it does is to log you into a



server that brings up a list of people's names and topics. By simply double clicking a name, the system attempts to "dial" the person. If they're already talking, a standard busy signal is heard.

If you get through, suddenly you're speaking to a total stranger, on another side of the world. Conversations are often interesting and fun. If you connect to the opposite gender, they can be even more fun...

Iphone also allows for a communal white board to be used. It is



common practice for iPhone chat to become a kind of digital dating service. People talk via voice and if they have a digital camera or a scanner, put pictures of themselves up on the whiteboard.

Overall, iPhone is an excellent product, the best one out there actually. We still need more bandwidth, full duplex modems and the ability for multiple parties. It's fun to use now and practical to talk to a family member or friend cheaply. With no need for additional hardware and at a good price, it's a welcome addition to the Internet suite of applications.

Home Video Conferencing 2 solutions tested

On to the big kahuna of Internet bandwidth intensive applications. Video Conferencing. We had 2 cards at our disposal and put them through as fair a test as we could.

In this situation, 2 PC PowerPlay techs dialled into the same ISP. This had to be done because quite simply, using a modem, video conferencing is impractical and barely useable across the net. We communicated for 2 hours straight with each card to give it more than enough time to stabilise the codecs (compression/decompression algorithms).



Just about anyone can figure out Creative's webphone

CREATIVE LABS

The Creative Labs Video conferencing kit consists of 2 items. The Creative Labs Video Blaster and the Creative Camera.

Video Blaster IE 500 PCI.

Price : \$499

Formats: NTSC, PAL-B/G, Secam and SVHS

Camera format: NTSC Colour

Driver Support: Twain compatible

Maximum Video resolution: 320 x 240

Maximum Frame rate: 30fps

Maximum Colour depth: 24 bit

Maximum Resolution: 1280 x 1024 24 bit colour.

Software Included:

Family Album Creator

Asymetrix's Digital Video Producer

Microsoft Internet Explorer

Image Pals 2

AVI to MPEG Converter

HotMetal light.

Creative Webphone

Installation

The Video Blaster has been around for quite a while and has undergone many revisions. Its latest incarnation is as a PCI board. Connecting the card is very easy. It inserts into the PCI slot and then involves connecting a male to female 15 pin VGA pass through connector from the primary video card to the Video Blaster (VB).

The only point of confusion is said male to female connector. As the VB has 2 female plugs, one input, one output, and no markings on the card identifying either. It is actually possible to plug the cable into the wrong one. Although this won't harm the card, it does mean that it won't work and an inexperienced person may find themselves on the Creative helpdesk.

This could have been overcome simply by mimicking the way it's done on the 3Dfx. They use a male to female plug so that one input is male, the other female. You can't get it wrong!

The final things that needs to be attached are the specialised cable that ends in a single male video RCA connection and a female Super VHS plug. Still being picky, the male end of the plug is kind of stupid. A female end would have allowed you to use the male to male video plug that came with the card. Or even to buy one cheaply from Dick Smith or other electronics store. If you needed to extend the length of the cable, being a male end, it means you have to buy

a female-to-female gender bender, of which a cheap one can degrade the quality of the image.

Making it work

Next it's time to install the drivers. Upon booting Windows 95, the card being fully plug and play compatible is recognised by the operating system. By simply inserting the CD, Windows 95 installs the necessary driver simply and easily and all is running.

With the card up and running, the next object that needs to be installed is the Video Camera. A small lightweight unit, it's practical and has a lens the size of a fibre optic. It sits firmly anywhere, be it on top of monitors or your desk and has a shutter to close for privacy. The Camera uses an external power supply and has one female RCA in port.

When everything is plugged in, the first thing you'll notice is a horrendous discolouration along the right hand side of your monitor. It looks like the brightness has been turned higher in that spot only.

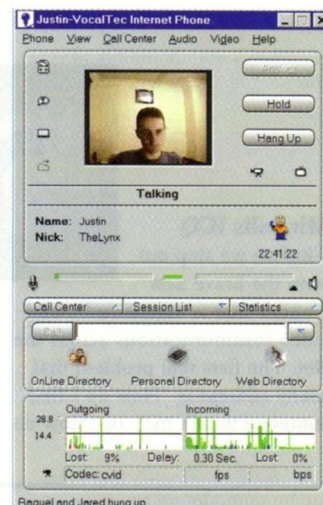
The next thing is that there will be a purple patch and video interference on your screen. This is the Video Blasters way of telling you that it needs to be configured (tongue in cheek). Admittedly, the entire process is explained in the manual, but can be overlooked by the zealous ones. Configuring the card is a matter of adjusting vertical and horizontal axis' to align the video image within the VB.

Using it

Upon testing the camera and card, without recording or transmitting, it seems to skip. One of the easiest ways to test a conferencing card is to wave at the camera, if their is jitter, then the hardware is lagging. In the Video Blaster's case, it would skip about 20 milliseconds, that might seem inconsequential, but the human eye can definitely detect one fifth of a second.

One of the biggest problems with the Creative Camera is that its light adjusting ability is poor. In a well lit room, your can barely make anything out. The only solution was to shine a lamp in each parties face, making the experience highly unpleasant.

The video conferencing package that comes with the kit is Creative's Webphone. A very nice looking chat product at that. Designed to look like a mobile phone, it even has a little flip section. Plenty of buttons allow you to dial people's IP addresses directly,



Internet phone strikes a balance between useful design & cool but useless techy stuff

or to type in their name so their current IP can be located from the Creative server. Upon selecting the destination, your phone makes a dialling noise and the others will ring. When they answer, bang, you're in and conferencing.

Once connected, the Webphone codec is immediate. It doesn't build the image, instead it appears instantly. The quality however is not acceptable. You simply can't make out the other persons face. Vocal communications are fine, but video conferencing is the point of this exercise.

There is the option to take a snapshot of the other person, which does render a better quality image, but one decent image maketh not Video Conferencing. The frame rate however was good. It updated quickly and a fair rating of around 7 fps through a 28.8 modem is accurate.

What else is it good for?

Creative aren't fully to blame for they have obviously worked hard to develop a low cost solution that combines average quality with average frame rate. Which is exactly what you get across the Internet. To be fair to this technology, through RCA, or an internal network, there are a lot more uses for this card. Here are some suggestions:

Because of the tiny lens, you could drill a very small hole and mount the camera on the front door, allowing you to watch activities outside whilst using your PC. Likewise, mounting it in a babies room would allow total video monitoring whilst you were surfing the Net. Across a corporate Network, the technology is great. Perfect even. Otherwise, it's an effective tool for home monitoring, at least until we all have cable modems. Then this technology will indeed challenge the conventional phone.

MICRONICA

Micronica are a bunch down in Melbourne that seem to spend a good amount of time researching the products they're going to sell. Top marks to them, because the Digital Vision Invideo Computer Eyes product is very impressive.

Digital Vision Invideo PCI.

Price: \$499

Formats: NTSC, PAL-B/G, Secam and SVHS

Camera format: NTSC Colour

Driver Support: Video codec

Maximum Video resolution: 640 x 480

Maximum Frame rate: 30fps

Maximum Colour depth: 24 bit

Maximum Resolution: 1280 x 1024 24 bit colour.

Software Included: Cu-Seeme Asymetrix's Digital Video Producer

Making it work

Installing it is very easy. You can just plug it into a PCI port on your computer and that's it. It doesn't need any pass through cables, connectors.. Nothing! Everything should be this simple!

The card has one female RCA input (top marks there) and a SVHS input as well. Utilising a female RCA, there is no need to purchase Gender Benders and you can use the included Video lead or one as long as you want.

Actually, one of the biggest raspberries that Digital Vision blow Creative's way is that there is no configuring. With the camera plugged in, it works, straight away. No need to align anything, this is truly a plug and play card!

Installing the drivers is also easy. Upon booting Windows 95, the card being plug and play compliant is immediately recognised and a disk requested. The only point of complaint is that the writing on the disks is so minutely small that it is actually possible to pick up the

Win 3.1 drivers by accident. Not that we, ahem, cough, may have, shuffle, done that here, avert eyes...

Anyway, providing that accident isn't made, the drivers install first time perfectly, and the card works great. The next step being to plug in the camera. This is a little different, may scare the novices but still should be considered another feather in its cap.

The camera doesn't use an external power supply (though it could at your own cost - 12V necessary), instead, an adaptor plugs into the 5.25 power socket in your PC and a bracket that screws over one of your empty slots has a male power outlet in it. A unique and original solution that will ultimately save you a power point and money.

Using it

The camera itself is also vastly superior to the Creative one. It features a number of external controls that allow you to set the focus, brightness and WB. Also, even in a dimly lit room, its auto light setting is perfect. With nothing but an overhead light, the entire room is perfectly discernible and there's no need to shine a lamp in your face. There's also a shutter to close for privacy.

With everything plugged in, the first tests of the card will allow you to check its frame rate and local accuracy. Again, superior to the Creative kit, it's clear, sharp, and never skips a beat. It's just like watching TV on your PC.

Using the card on the Net however, started off being rather a tragedy. Cu-Seeme, the included conferencing package is quite simply, NOT

useable through a modem.

Designed by people at the University of Cornell, its primary purpose was to allow multi user communication inside the University.

Making its way onto the internet, it's the best VC product out there - if you have an internal network. Utilising our modem test, it quite simply wasn't useable.

Not wanting to disappoint the masses though, and curious as to what this card can do, we ripped a copy of Internet phone 4 off the Net and gave it a go. What a good idea that was as well. Iphone 4 with Video is a vastly superior product to all the others, full stop.

With the Digivision camera, it allowed us multiple resolutions, and worked beautifully. The first thing we noticed about this kit was that the quality was vastly superior. This had nothing to do with Iphone, it was just using the Windows 95 driver for the card. Myself and the other tech both agreed that we could recognise each other, very easily and that this was the kit to have.

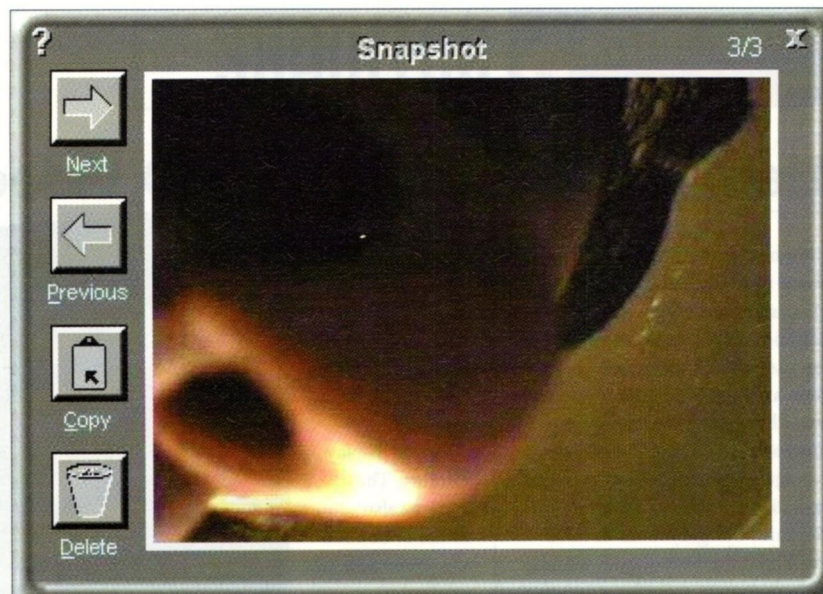
High quality output on this card was indeed that. Although you'd only get about 1 frame a minute,

the quality was as close as you'd get to a digital camera. Medium resolution still offered excellent clarity and about 6 frames a second, which was great. Even at 640 x 480 and low quality you got about 2 frames a minute. At that high a res, what a feat!

In the end...

Overall, the Micronica kit is vastly superior to the Creative one. With higher resolutions, better lighting, manual controls and super simple installation with no glitches at all, it's the kit to have. Video conferencing still isn't that practical, but on this card, even with a modem, it's definitely useable where the Creative kit isn't. Of course, once we have cable access to the Internet, this is the kit to have. Let's just hope we don't exhaust all the bandwidth!

Jere Lawrence & Justin Searchfield



Microsoft® Windows® 95 gives you the boot to kick some serious butt.

To make your games the coolest they can be, you need the boot of Microsoft® Windows® 95.

Its 32-bit architecture not only lets you kick some serious enemy butt, but also gives you full-on, 3D graphics that'll blow you away. To prove our point, Windows 95 now comes with a complimentary CD sampler with 13 hair raising games. So get with the program. If it's full-on games that get you going, then it's time to feel the boot of Windows 95.

Complimentary Games Sampler available while stocks last. Available from participating resellers.



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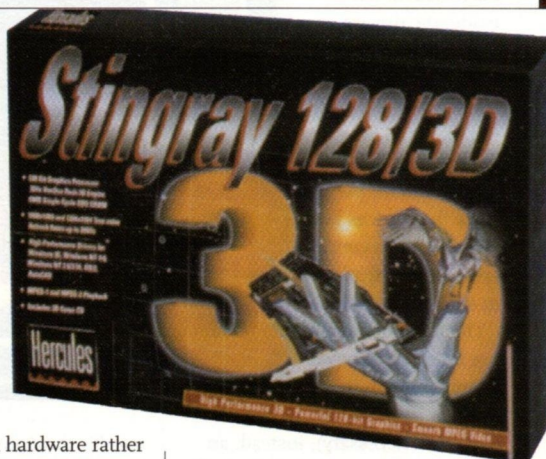
HOTWARE

Hercules Stingray 128/3D Video Card

It's happened, finally! A 3D accelerator card that combines excellent 2D performance with a top end 3D graphics chip on a single board. In the past, 3D/2D cards haven't quite been all they were cracked up to be, either poor 3D performance compared to dedicated 3D cards, or average 2D performance compared to dedicated 2D cards. The Hercules Stingray looks to have combined the best of both worlds, with 3 separate graphics processors for 3D processing, 2D processing, and video playback.

It's not just any old 3D chip either, Hercules have used the current industry leader, the 3Dfx Voodoo Rush chipset with a single slot of

6MB EDO DRAM. 2MB of the RAM is reserved for dedicated texture map memory, and the other 4MB is shared as display memory. The Stingray also claims to be a second generation 3D accelerator, because it handles the triangle setup in hardware rather than in software, which in the past has created a computing intensive software bottleneck. The 3Dfx chipset supports a host of 3D special



effects, including advanced texture mapping, point sampled bi-linear filtering, MIPmap filtering, depth cueing perspective

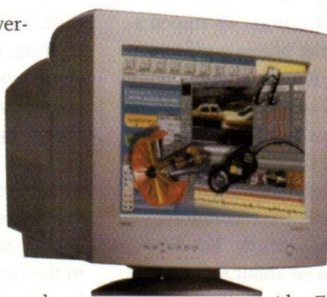
correction, fogging, alpha blending, Z-buffering, flat shading, and Gouraud shading as well.

Full screen/full motion video playback hasn't been neglected either, with a 64 step bilinear filter combined with full line buffer providing playback at a very respectable 30 fps, and the MMX optimised card supports Mpeg-1 and Mpeg-2 playback as well. For an all in one top end 3D/128-bit 2D card, the Stingray 128/3D will more than satisfy all your gaming needs as well as just about anything else you could want to do with your computer, and at a very respectable r.r.p. of \$499 it's comparatively affordable too.

NEC MultiSync P1150 and E1100 monitor

Monitors are often an overlooked part of a computer setup. There's so many advertisements for computer systems that spruik on and on about their motherboards, video cards and so on and then tack on '15-inch monitor' as an afterthought at the end. Dammit, it's just not good enough. The monitor is a bloody important part of a system - it's where you see what happens, and if it doesn't work very well you're going to have a shitty experience no matter how blindingly fast your processor is.

A decent monitor adds so much to the experience that once you've seen one in action, there's no going back. NEC have a built up a name for good monitors, right up there with Sony and the other bigwigs, and they've just released a couple of new ones, the P1150 and E1100. Both 21-inch monitors, The E1100 is designed more



for the home user whereas the P1150 is more of your top end CAD/CAM type for professional use. They're both high quality, with the E1100 using flat square technology CRT with a 0.28 dot pitch, and the P1150 the aperture grille CRT model.

One of the problems in the past with larger screen monitors (the E1100 has a viewing area of 19.8", and the P1150 19.6") has been the image variation from magnetic fields, but NEC reckon they've licked the problem with their GlobalSync control which will, they say, give you a focused and crisp image. The other problem with large monitors is what's called 'moire', which is where a repetitive wavy pattern appears on the screen. To counter this, NEC have implemented an imaginatively named circuit called the 'moire canceller circuit', and it's located within the OSM (On-Screen Manager) controls so you can adjust it yourself too.

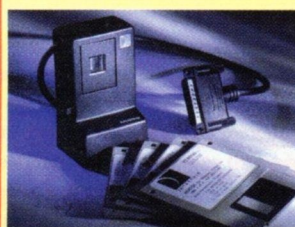
They're both Plug'n'Play compatible, as you would expect and compatible with either PC's or Macs (with an adaptor). They both sound like something any gamer would be proud to own, but take a deep breath because here's the not-so-good part: the price. You're looking at around about \$4000 for the E1100, and \$5000 for the P1150. That's a fair chunk of your pocket money, but if you can afford it it'll enhance your gaming experience a hell of a lot.

Big monitor = big fun gaming



Datasonix notebook tape backup

You tend to become accustomed to things getting smaller, faster and better in the technological world - nothing to get all that excited about, but every so often something grabs your eye and you find yourself thinking 'how did they do that?'. Datasonix have just released a tape backup drive for notebooks, called the Pereos. Not all that impressed? Well, what about if we told you that the cartridge was about the size of a twenty cent coin? Still not impressed? How about if we told you that each cartridge stores around 1 gigabyte of information, and transfers at up to 10Mb a minute, or 1Mb every 6 seconds? Pretty impressive, we think. Most backup systems are fairly small, but often in the past they haven't been very portable. With the Pereos it isn't just the cartridges that are tiny, the whole unit is about as big as a walkman and weighs in at around 10 ounces, making it easy and simple to carry from place to place, so it can be used as a sort of secondary hard drive as well as a backup utility. There's no skimping on the



usual backup utilities either, with incremental backups and restorations, a full search function, file import and export, and more.



Matrox Rainbow Runner Studio

If you ever wanted to watch TV on your PC, or capture video, or create your own multimedia extravaganzas in the privacy of your home then you've probably considered a video editing card of some sort. Just imagine watching the Aussies beat the crap out of the Pommie cricket team in a window of your monitor while you pretend to do work! How cool would that be!

There is a catch though, the Rainbow runner will only work with the Matrox Mystique video card, as a daughterboard. If you've already got a Mystique, or were considering purchasing one, then for around \$500 this could be just what you've been waiting for.

Features-wise, it's looking pretty damn impressive. To begin with you can capture from a camcorder recording, edit in some wizz bang special effects, and then re-record the finished product on to the video tape. Then there's always the option to watch TV on the monitor, change channels or display options with the remote control, or just sit it in the background and set it to listen for some key words, at which point it'll pop back up on screen for you. Sounds pretty cool, you could just set the keywords to be 'Taylor' and 'century' and settle back to get some work done...

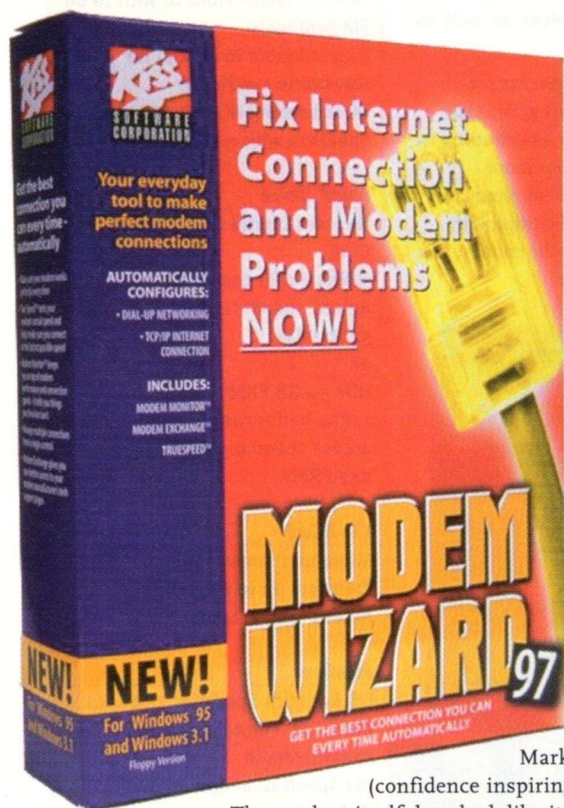
Of course, you could do the reverse as well; watch TV on your

monitor, and play games on your big screen stereo TV (either NTSC or PAL), and with the flicker reduction filter on the card the graphics display should be pretty decent too. Then there's video conferencing. Through a video camera your image is piped through to whomever you choose, and the Rainbow Runner also allows for a dual window display for multi-party conferencing. Of course, you could also just grab an image from a video or Mpeg file and resize it and print it out as a business card or as something to put in the family album. The



Rainbow Runner comes with a 3 year warranty, and for more information you can contact Focal Point software on (02) 9925 0388.

Modem Wizard



Modems can be a big hassle when they decide they don't want to work properly. To fix them, you're usually faced with a lot of frustrating guesswork or a call to a help desk, neither of which are attractive options in most cases. Now there's an Australian product to help you when you get stuck, it's called Modem Wizard and it's from a company called

Marketing Results (confidence inspiring name, huh).

The product itself does look like it could come in handy occasionally, especially for those not all that familiar with dial-up networking, or modems in general. The main function of it would seem to be the diagnostic equipment; it will perform tests to determine just what's going wrong, and where physically the problem lies as well. There's a few other goodies including line speed testing and help with modem installation as well. For around \$50 bucks, if you're new to the world of modem communications it might just be what you need.

NEC Versa 2500/2600 Notebook

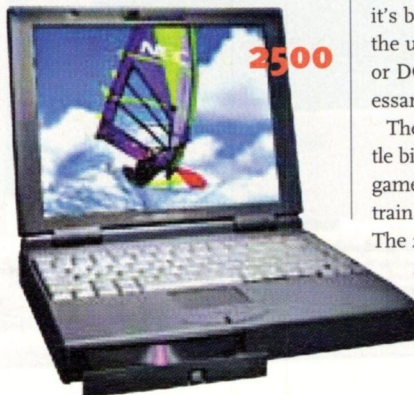
It's kind of sad when notebooks start coming out that are more powerful than your desktop computer. At the very least, you know it's time to start thinking about that upgrade...

NEC have two new notebook computers in their Versa series, the 2500 and the 2600. Both are pretty damn high end machines for notebooks, but the 2500 is the slightly less powerful of the two. The 2500 comes with a P133 processor, 256k L2 cache, and a 12.1 inch DSTN high resolution colour monitor capable of resolutions of up to 800x600 with 256 colours, 8 x CD, 16-bit Sound Blaster compatible card, two stereo speakers and a microphone, a 1.08 GB hard drive, and 16MB EDO RAM. If you think that's impres-

sive for a notebook, the Versa 2600 is even more impressive, with the addition of a P150 MMX processor, 10 x CD, and a slightly larger 1.44 GB HD.

They both weigh around 3kg each, and have ample room for SCSI controllers, modems or video cards to be added. Then there's two nifty little features as well - firstly the infra-red port, which allows for wireless communication, be that for printing or transmitting data at a speed of up to 115.2kbps with other infra-red capable devices. The second is the choice of operating systems included with the system - the first time it's booted up a menu pops up and the user chooses from Windows95 or DOS/Win 3.11, with the unnecessary OS being deleted.

They're both more than just a little bit cool, and the idea of playing a game or two on those interminable train trips home is most appealing. The 2500 retails for around \$4200, and the 2600 for around \$5500, and Nec Australia has more info on (02) 930 2000.



The Dell Dimension XPS M200s

Ahhh, It's a good time to be a serious gamer. Actually, it's always been a good time to be a serious gamer, but now it's an even better time to be a serious gamer. A couple of months ago we told you about the new spankily nice Compaq machine designed with the gamer mind, and now we've managed to secure another high spec machine designed by Dell for people just like us (except with more money).



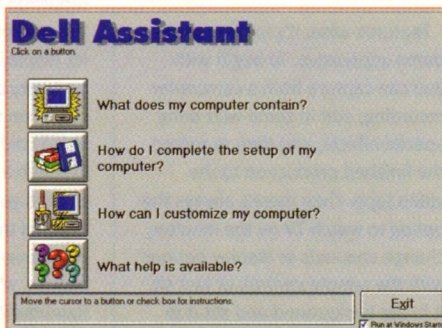
Is Dell. Is good

They're called the Dell Dimension XPS M series, and while there are a few different models with different components, we've got our grubby little hands on the biggest and the best - the M200s.

How's this for starters? The new 430VX chipset running an Intel 200MHz processor equipped with MMX, 512k single bank pipeline burst cache, 32MB SDRAM, a 4MB Matrox Millennium video card, Altec ACS-90 speakers, a Sound Blaster Vibra 16 (hardwired in to the motherboard), US Robotics 33.6k internal modem, 2 external USB ports, a 17" Trinitron monitor, a

12 x CD ROM, and 3.2GB of hard drive space. Dell have mostly got it right on the nose. For any avid gamer, this would have to be close to a perfect machine. It would have been nice for a 3D accelerator card to be included at least as an option, and maybe a slightly higher end sound card (the AWE 32 is an optional upgrade) but these are really fairly small quibbles, and easy to integrate separately should the buyer choose to do so. For the price tag of \$4,399, you'll also get the obligatory copy of Win '95 installed, as well as the MS Office Pro pack and Norton Bundle as well. The case itself is well designed and functional, easy and simple to open and makes physically installing add-ons a doddle with their compact motherboard layout. There's plenty of space for peripheral devices too, with three ISA and four PCI slots, as well as a three year warranty in case you screw something up...

All up it's a great system; easy to install and use, and has



Helpful help screens to suit novices as well as experienced users

enough Dell help systems pre-installed so that even a complete novice would be up and running in no time at all. For the more advanced user, it offers plenty of grunt and high end equipment. Simply, if you have the money, you could do a lot worse.

System Specs

Motherboard:

P55C 430VX PCiset
200MHz MMX chipset with 32kb internal cache
64 bit BUS, 32 bit address BUS
512k SRAM L2 single bank, pipeline burst cache
32 MB SDRAM (upgradeable to 64MB SDRAM, 128MB EDO)

Video Card

Matrox Millennium
220MHz DAC
4MB WRAM - 6ons
16 bit Z-buffering
Resolution:
1600 x 1280 @ 64k colours (110Hz)
1280 x 1024 @16.7 million (200Hz)

Sound

Sound Blaster Vibra 16 with 16 bit FM synthesis
(upgradeable to AWE32 for 32 bit wavetable synthesis)
Altec Lansing ACS 90 amplified speakers with 4.5W per channel

Hard Drive

Western Digital Caviar 3.2GB EIDE
128kb buffer cache
access speed <12ms
5200 RPM
or
IBM 3.2GB EIDE
128kb buffer cache
access speed 9.5ms
5400 RPM

CD ROM

Mitsumi12 speed EIDE
Transfers up to 1800kbps
Access time <140ms

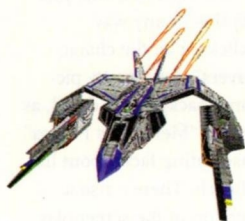
Modem

US Robotics Sportster 33.6kbps Data/Fax/Voice/Full duplex speakerphone
Fax speed 14.4kbps



Fast processor, big monitor, and top end equipment

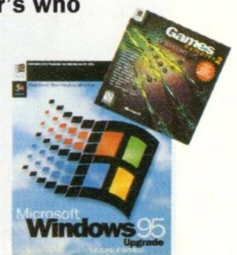
Microsoft® Windows® 95 gives you the *boot* to *kick* some serious *butt*.



Serious studies by serious people with degrees have shown that computer games are cool. To make your games even cooler, you need the boot of **Microsoft® Windows® 95.**

The 32-bit architecture not only lets you kick some serious enemy butt, but also gives you 3D graphics that'll blow you away and a bad case of white knuckles. To prove our point, Windows 95 now comes with a **complimentary CD sampler** of 13 hair raising games that will get your blood pumping.

But only for a limited time, while stocks last and from participating resellers. More importantly, many of today's coolest, out-there games are being specifically developed for Windows 95, so without it, these new games just won't happen. For those gamers who are into the 'net, nothing gives you a faster response, bigger, badder graphics and easier multiplayer links than Windows 95. So get with the program. If it's full-on games that get you going, then it's time to feel the boot of Windows 95.



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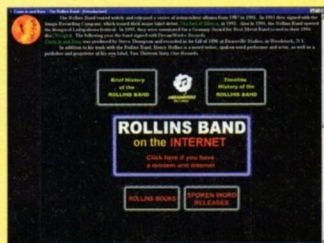
Complimentary Games Sampler available while stocks last. Available from participating resellers.

FRONTLINE WGCP



DIVERSIONS

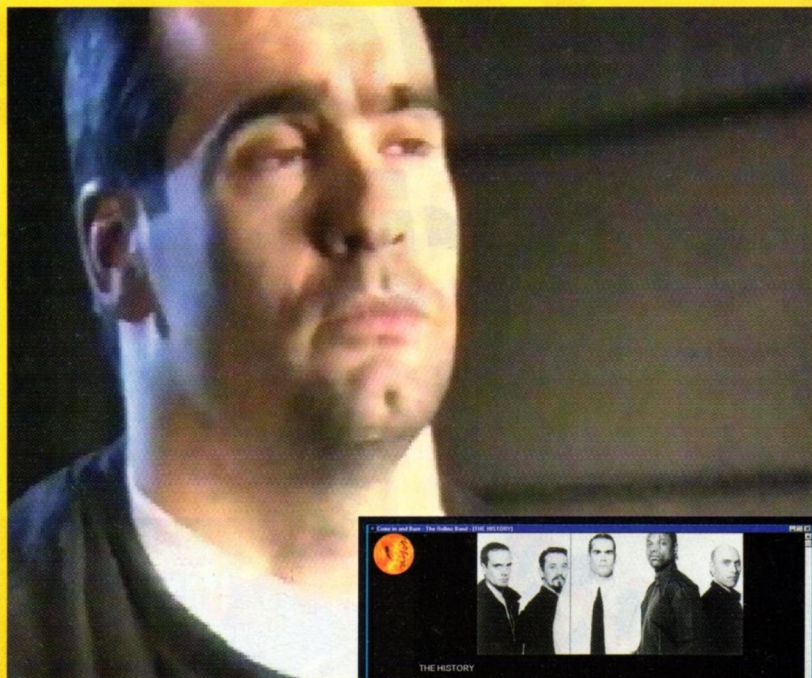
The Rollins Band Come in and Burn - the interactive CD



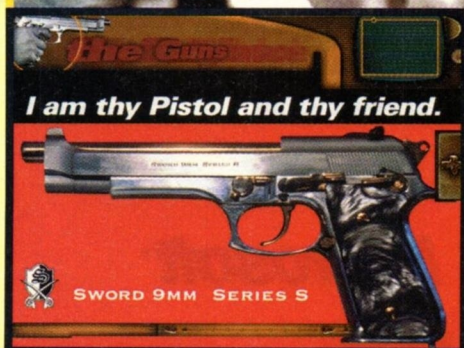
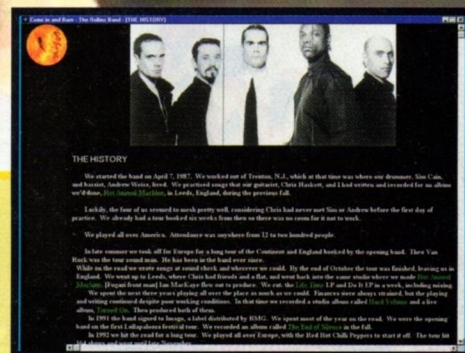
As technology develops it has to be more and more compelling to integrate music CDs with interactive elements for artists and record companies alike. There have been a few before, though most haven't proved to be all that popular - possibly because they were often crap. A music CD with a few photos and a two page bio of the band doesn't make for much of an interactive experience, I'm afraid.

Henry Rollins, never one to be backward about coming forward, along with his band have helped to engineer their latest CD to incorporate interactive elements with a web page as well. And for the most part, it works, though not quite as well as one might hope. The music itself is pretty good if you're a

Rollins Band fan, but again the interactive elements leave a little to be desired. There's a couple of pages of text - a nice timeline of the band and Henry, as well as some material about their past releases. Then there's the .avi clips, which are nice even if they are a little short. All up though, it's little more than filler. There's nothing really to keep you happy for more than a few minutes on the CD and while there is a link to the website there's nothing new there either, in fact it's pretty much the same thing as the CD. It's a shame really, because the potential of interactive music CD's is quite huge and has yet to be exploited. Still, if you're a Rollins fan then you might enjoy it...at least for a while.



Henry's career choice was a sensible one, as front row forwards usually burn out at 30



A gun or a pretty girl. We know what we prefer

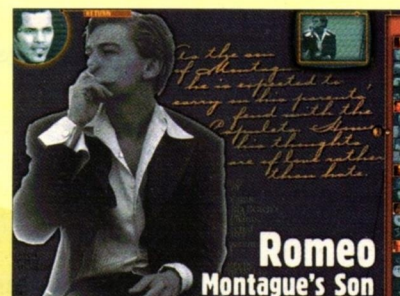
Romeo & Juliet

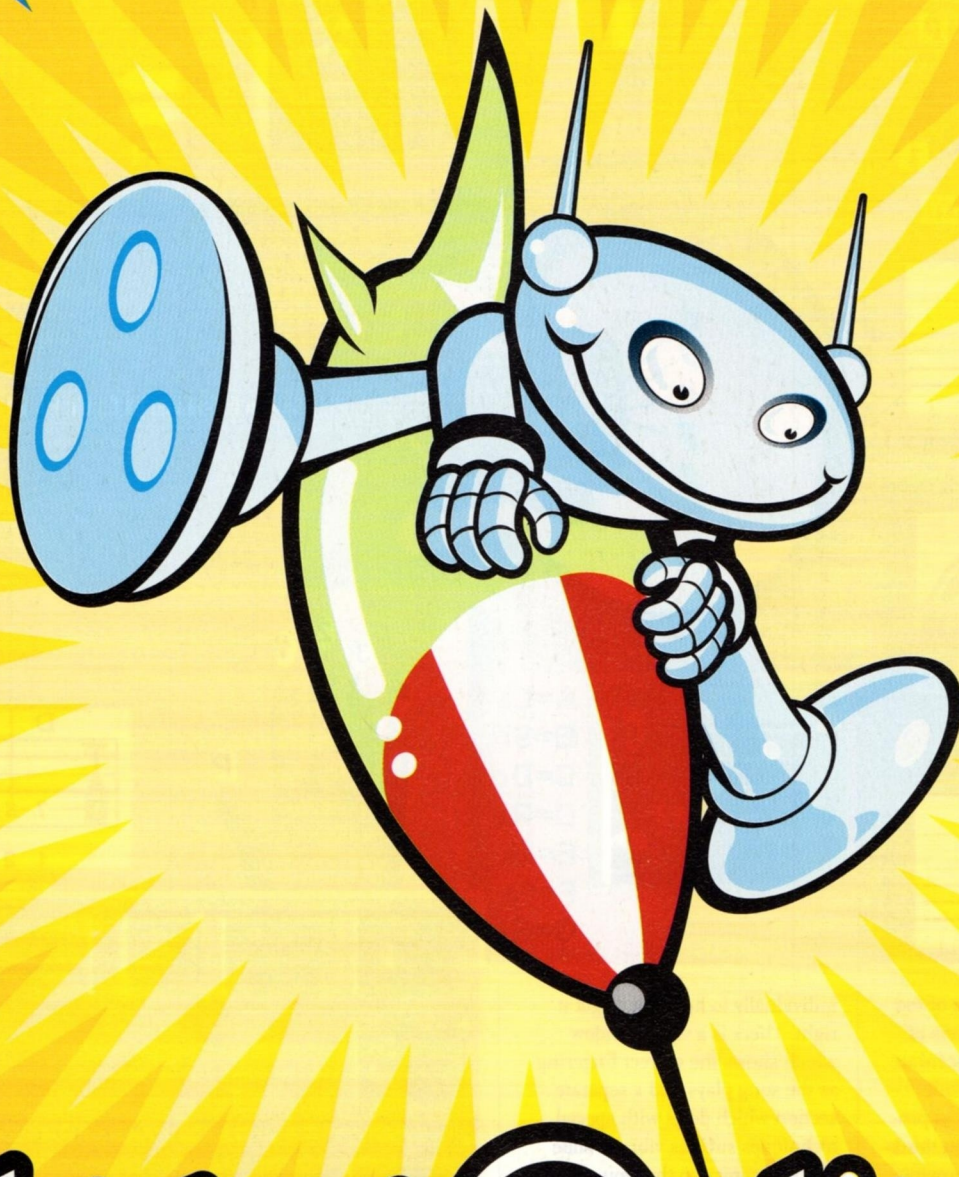
Subtitled "An Interactive Trip To Verona Beach", this CD ROM essentially contains an edited highlights package of Baz Luhrmann's astounding film adaptation (it was clearly just too good to win an Academy Award) of "William Shakespeare's Romeo & Juliet". After placing the CD in the drive, you sit back to watch a sequence of stills from pivotal scenes detail the bare bones of the story. The collage presentation, incorporating the still shots, overlaid by text describing the scene, the appropriate music constantly playing, and short grabs of speech, is effective in capturing the spirit of the film. It must be said, though, that little of the startling visual impact of the film comes across successfully. I guess this is due mainly to the technical limitations of this sort of thing, but also because the fast edit, cut'n'-

paste style of the film is de rigueur for any competent multimedia CD ROM and, consequently, this just doesn't surprise in any way.

You can click on all the characters, or "Players", for a pretty picture and some background detail, as well as opening "Mercutio's Pillbox" for more fascinating facts about life in Verona Beach. There's also a complete version of the screenplay for you to peruse. All told, I found it interesting for about an hour or so, but I don't think it has what you might call "long term value".

D.W.

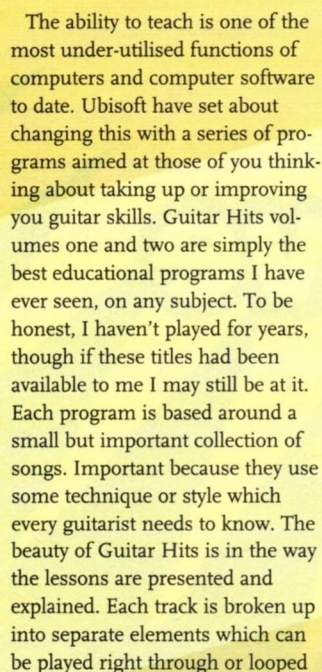




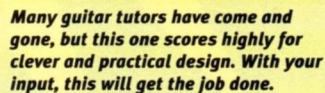
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Windows into the FUTURE

Monitor technology evolves at last

Virtually all monitors sold for home computers these days are based around the CRT (Cathode Ray Tube). The CRT has been around for a very long time now and hasn't really changed much. Of course, today's CRTs have better focus, clarity and picture quality due to advancements in technology.

Notebook owners will know that their display is based on LCD (Liquid Crystal Display) technology. Display manufacturers have been ramping up their production of the larger size LCD panels for use in making flat panel displays for desktop PCs as well as notebooks. Another display technology has emerged from various R & D departments called PDP (Plasma Display Panel), they come in sizes of 20 inches and beyond. So, what do these new display technologies offer games players?

CATHODE RAY TUBES

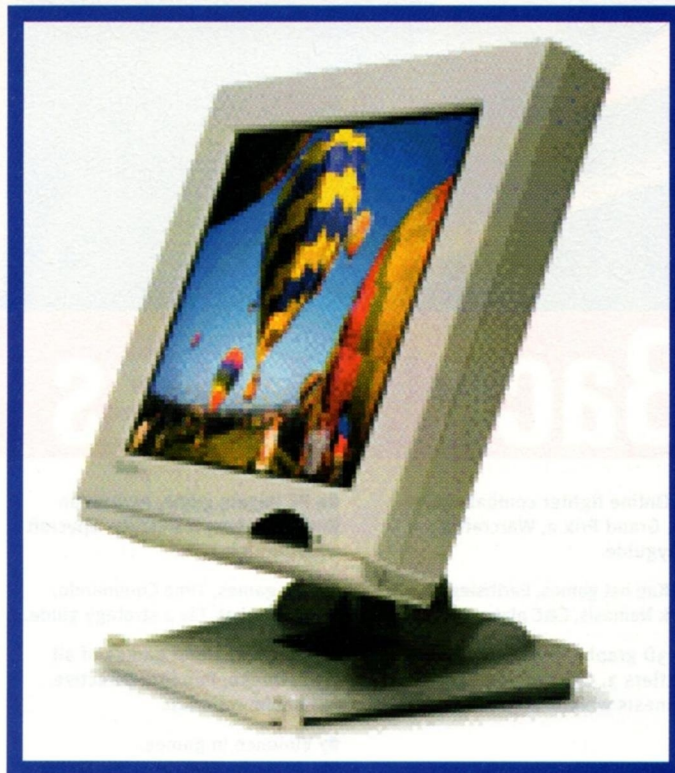
Cathode Ray Tubes have been used for displays for a long time, mainly due to the flexibility and cost of manufacture of the CRT. Most gamers would have a 14 or 15 inch monitor, if your lucky you may have a larger display maybe 17 or 21 inch. If you have played games on monitors of this size you should know that the experience is definitely more immersive than viewing the game on a small screen.

The CRT is very flexible in its ability to display images in a wide selection of resolutions, most monitors are capable of displaying images from 640x480 pixels to 1024x768 pixels. This is partly due to the fact that the CRT is an analogue device which also gives it the ability to display an unlimited number of colours.

Monitors are usually very bulky and can take up a lot of valuable desk space, this is because the CRT itself has to be large enough to project the electrons at the phosphor on the screen, which in turn creates the image you see. Most gamers will know that a standard monitor is great for playing games, but what if you don't have the desk space available, or what something better is available?. Come on down!, Flat Panel Displays

LIQUID CRYSTAL DISPLAY

The LCD display has been used mainly in the notebook market, where a CRT would be way to big to lug around with you. There are two main types of LCD in production at the moment DSTN/STN (Dual SuperTwist Nematic) and TFT (Thin Film Transistor) commonly known as passive and active matrix respectively. Many companies are now releasing LCD based monitors for the desktop market, but prices are currently quite high. Prices should fall as the major players in the LCD business start increased



LCD offers a cost-effective solution for colour flat screen monitors, but can't handle fast movement on-screen.

production of their larger screen LCDs. Currently 13.3 inch displays are being used to create flat panel monitors with the same viewable area as a 15 inch CRT monitor.

DSTN - PASSIVE MATRIX

The cheapest LCD to manufacture at the moment is DSTN type. DSTN are not very much use for the average gamer, as they have an annoying trait, fast moving images on the screen leave a blurring effect as they move. This is due to the liquid crystal not being able to refresh every pixel in time. I am sure that if you played slow mov-

ing strategy games you would be able to cope with this, but playing something like Sega Rally on one would be very annoying to say the least. Sharp have a set of LCD monitors that employ STN (SuperTwist Nematic) but have developed a new addressing scheme that eliminates the associated blurring effect. Other companies are not investing much R & D time with STN technology and are pumping most of their resources into the newer LCD technology, because, among other things, STN has a tendency to have a very small viewing angle.



3D Holographic technology. An HDVD device they can sell you, don't expect to get much change from \$15,000 though

TFT - ACTIVE MATRIX

TFT LCD screens have a distinct advantage over DSTN and have the ability to display fast moving images without blurring. The viewing angle of TFT screens is also greater than DSTN screens, meaning your friends can see what's happening on screen without needing to be directly in front of the screen. Most major LCD manufacturers are currently ramping up production of these type of screens, especially in sizes of 12.1 inch's and up. These companies are also trying to reduce the cost of manufacture by achieving higher yields in fabrication and by using bigger pieces of glass to produce the LCDs. meaning more LCDs can be created at once. The obvious benefit of an active matrix screen is that it will behave just like a CRT monitor screen when running your games, but take up a lot less desktop real estate, leaving space for your other important peripherals.

PDP - THE BIGGER PICTURE

LCDs are very expensive to manufacture in large sizes. A few of the big display companies have been working on a new display method known as PDP (Plasma Display Panel). PDPs work by using little gas discharge cells which make up the pixels, but because these gas discharge cells can't be miniaturised it is not possible to create a PDP that is smaller than 20 inch-

es. There are a number of PDP manufacturers with units that have display sizes ranging from 21 inches to 42 inches, imagine playing your latest games on a screen that size! The only problem that PDPs have is the fact that they can't display high resolutions yet, 640x480 seems to be the norm. This could cause games players problems when SVGA (800x600 and up) resolutions are used more in mainstream games. These Plasma Displays are also not cheap, although they are cheaper than an LCD of similar size. They are probably out of reach for most gamers and will probably never make it onto mainstream desktops, you should see them appearing in your local airport as information screens and maybe on your lounge room wall as your TV.

HDVD - 3D IMAGES THAT FLOAT IN AIR

A lot of people would say "No way!" if told that this new display technology could project 3D floating images into the air in a SCI-FI'esque manner. But it is true. This latest display technology HDVD (High Definition

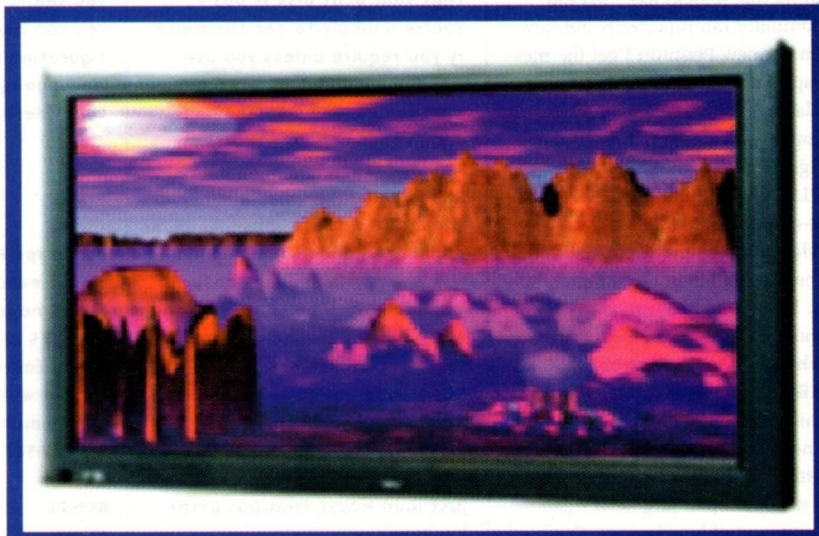
Volumetric Display) created by a company called Dimension Media Associates can do just that. Given any video input, these devices can project a free floating images into the air up to 10 feet in width! HDVD is also capable of projecting 3 dimensional images without the need for special goggles or VR headsets. These 3 dimensional images are fully viewable from any angle and under most lighting conditions. This is accomplished with the use of a complex array of precision optical components, parabolic mirrors and beam splitters which then project the resulting still or moving image into the air.

3D style games would take on a whole new meaning, instead of just seeing the 3D environment in the game on a 2D screen the actual scene could be recreated in front of you. This would allow you to view the game in full 3D, you could for instance look under a table for extra ammo. As this is a new technology, the price for a HDVD device is definitely out of reach of most gamers at present, but as we know prices fall, and with a technology like this it certainly won't be long before you can buy them with a standard PC (hurry up I say!).

FLAT OR FAT?

It may be a while until we all have flat panel displays on our walls and desktops. Compaq's Presario PCs have an LCD monitor included, so you can see that they are already slowly starting to filter through to the general consumer market. The real problem that must be overcome is the high price of flat panel screens, the price is almost 4 times that of an equivalent sized CRT monitor. Once this hurdle is overcome then LCD monitors can become a major contender in the display arena.

The technology that most gamers (especially me!) will be waiting for is HDVD or a similar technology. 10 foot 3D images floating in space is what dreams are made of. The possibilities for games are virtually endless, Whole rooms could come alive in your living room while 6 foot monsters pounce on you from around your sofa! Suddenly Star Trek's Holodeck doesn't look so ridiculous...



Fujitsu's 42 inch gas plasma display. Just imagine that hanging on a wall in your living room!

**PC PLAYING UP?
HARDWARE HASSLES?
SOFTWARE NOT QUITE AS
SOFT AS IT SHOULD BE?
DON'T TAKE IT OUT ON YOUR
BABY, TAKE IT UP WITH ME.
I HAVE THE ANSWERS TO
YOUR PROBLEMS.**

SETUP

PC PowerPlay

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STRAWBERRY HILLS

NSW 2016

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WHEN YOU WRITE, REMEMBER TO INCLUDE AS MUCH PERTINENT INFORMATION AS POSSIBLE. SEND YOUR CONFIG.SYS AND AUTOEXEC.BAT AND ANY ASSOCIATED *.INI FILES FOR WINDOWS THAT MIGHT TELL ME MORE ABOUT YOUR PROBLEM. GIVE ME AS DETAILED AN EXPLANATION AS YOU CAN AND BE SURE TO INCLUDE AS MUCH DETAIL AS POSSIBLE ABOUT YOUR PC. FEEL FREE TO EMAIL YOUR QUESTIONS OR, IF YOU WANT TO SNAIL MAIL, PLEASE REMEMBER TO WRITE CLEARLY OR BETTER STILL, PRINT YOUR LETTERS.

MODEM MAYHEM

>q My parents own a Packard Bell Pentium 150, with 32 megs of RAM, 2 gig hard drive, 8 speed CD ROM and it runs MOST things perfectly. Although I do have 2 challenges for you to ponder over;

1. Even though Origins 'Strike Commander' is an ancient game I think that it kicks ass... My old computer ran it perfectly but now on my new Pentium I get the message not enough DOS memory... blah, blah, blah. I have included copies of my autoexec.bat and config.sys from my C:. Can you PLEASE tell me what the problem is or to fix it at least, and maybe what I may or may not need out of the crap that is in these files.
2. My second problem is my modem, it's F#@ked up. Firstly when I try to ring one of the local BBS's it connects ok but then all of this crap starts filling the screen and I can't do anything I can see a little bit of their stuff mixed among a whole heap of jargon. It's like some sort of interference. I've tried it on a few different BBS's and they all do the same thing.

Secondly, I now have the pleasure of using the internet but once again my modem stuffs up. I can't log on at any more than 9600 so it takes me hours to do anything, if I try any faster it makes a funny sound about half way through connecting and i have to disconnect every time I try to use it. Oh and another thing I play modem games with my friends and if they ring me it always works perfectly, but if I ring them it either won't work or we lose the connection halfway through.

PLEASE HELP!! THANKYOU!

DAVID ANDERSON

CAMDEN, NSW

```
Config.sys
devicehigh=a:\himem.sys
devicehigh=a:\emm386.exe RAM
highscan
fileshigh=30
bufferhigh=30
lastdrive=e
dos=high
devicehigh=c:\pbtools\sgidecd.sys
/d:mscd0001
devicehigh=c:\windows\mouse.sys
```

```
autoexec.bat
c:\apps\univbe\univbe.exe
path c:\windows;c:\windows\command;c:\c:\apps
set bootdisk=a:
c:\sound16\utility\azcal.exe
lh
c:\windows\command\mscdex.exe
/d:mscd0001 /m:20 /s /e
set blaster=a220 i5 d1 t4
set sound=c:\sound16
```

>a 1. Thanks for including your a MEM /C, good move :-). I get the impression that your boot disk is DOS 7. You're unlikely to get the memory you require unless you use DOS 6. DOS 7 is as bloated as Windows 95. For a start you can see in your MEM /C dump that Windows is loading IFSHLP and SETVER automatically, even though it's not in your CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT, it's a rather annoying feature of DOS 7. That's wasted memory. Still, we'll see what we can do. Edit your CONFIG.SYS: Add UMB to your DOS=HIGH line. Add I=B000-B7FF to your EMM386 line. Remove the MOUSE.SYS driver, just load MOUSE from DOS after booting. In your AUTOEXEC.BAT reduce the CD-ROM buffers on your MSCDEX

line to /M:8 and don't load SMARTDRV or DOSKEY. That should help, but ideally you want to create a DOS 6 boot disk loading only what you need. 2. I know exactly what's wrong with your modem (does that make you happy?). It's all a matter of brand name, default settings and any settings you may have set yourself. For a start I'll explain your modems behavior: at a speed of 9600 your modem can communicate relatively fine over the telephone line, there's no need (but it helps greatly) to use error correction. When you try to go higher you MUST turn on error correction or you're going to get exactly what you saw — jargon. I think if you tried connecting to a BBS at 9600 it would work fine just as it does with your ISP. Likewise, when you tried to use your ISP at a faster speed it wouldn't connect — there's too much interference and the handshaking can't complete. Although different brand modems sometimes have their own subset of modem commands, the following should work for a large portion of modems. Open up a terminal window (you can do this with a DOS comms prog or a Windows comms prog, just get into 'terminal mode' any way you can) and type the following:

AT&V

Then write down all the values you see. I'm suggesting this so you can keep your original configuration in case you need it. We're going to reset your modem to its defaults. Type this:

AT&F

AT&W

Then type AT&V again. Are the values exactly the same? If not (and I hope not) try connecting to a BBS or the Internet at a speed faster than 9600 again. Does it work? If not, or if the values didn't change after you typed AT&F type the following:

AT%C1

AT+N3

AT&W

The first line turns on compression, always a good thing (though some games recommend you turn it off (AT%CO). Leave it on for all BBS and Internet stuff). The second line forces error correction which falls back to speed buffered (non error-correcting) mode if the receiving end doesn't agree.

DIE, WINDOWS, DIE!

>q I hate Windows 95. How can you recommend it? I put it on my computer and guess what? It screwed absolutely everything to hell and back. First I get fatal exception errors and then it can't read from the registry or something. It tells me to 'restore from backup'. Ha! what a joke! I can't get Windows to run. So I went into Xtree Gold to check things out, and the whole of the Windows tree is corrupted or something along those lines. I couldn't prune Win because it was corrupt so I had to reformat C:\! I have to thank PCPP for the DIY computer in Issue 11 for without that I would never have got any further. Well, after I installed DOS, do you think I was putting Win95 on again? Not if you paid me to. However Win3.1 now won't let me install any apps — like Office & Works. I get Application errors and General Protection Faults every two seconds and I can't get any work done. What can I do? Please help! I'm in Yr.11 and am in dire need of a WProcessing program. HELP! SOMEBODY! I don't know who else to turn to! May Windows 95 burn in hell for all eternity.

CHRISTIAN

HOPPERS CROSSING, VIC

Windows 95, the evil spawn that

>a it is, should surely die for all the pain it has caused you. I understand you brother, for I too have been screwed around by this semi-OS. In fact, most people get screwed by it — hence the need for columns like this and Random Access! Although Windows 95 is scum, I have to admit that your problems sound like your hardware — this isn't something you can blame Windows 95 for (damn!). Did you install it onto a clean system? Upgrading from Windows 3.1 can be problematic. Ideally

you should format your drive and then install Windows 95. If you still get major GPFs then it's certainly your hardware. The fact that you're having problems with Win3.1 as well seems to indicate it might not be a software problem at all. And when you viewed your disk in XTG the disk wasn't actually corrupted. Windows 95 uses VFAT, an extension of standard 16-bit FAT where long file names are stored using directory entries in the FAT structure. It's a poor way of trying to implement nice features, such as extended file names, that real operating systems have (such as UNIX, NT or OS/2). Thus VFAT is used to keep compatibility with FAT and obtain long file names. The problem is only Windows 95 can properly read VFAT, no other operating system recognises it, not even DOS (which is why you see file names truncated with '~' in DOS). File managers such as XTG can't properly interpret the directory structure when they read it in and the result is garbage — hence you can't use old DOS file managers or disk utils with Windows 95, you have to use Windows apps. Pain in the butt.

DIRECT-WHAT?

>q Just what the heck is Direct X?? I know it is a driver, but for what? Also, does Direct X have any side-effects on the computer? A couple of weeks ago, some of the icons in the start menu (such as the calculator, mine-sweeper and notepad) on my computer turned black, and then a few weeks later it changed back to normal icons. However, now they've turned into fluorescent colours!! Is this related to Direct X or is it something else??

Thankyou very much!

Yours Sincerely,

ROBIN CHAN

INTERNET

>a What's DirectX? Erm... ok.

Here's a brief summary: No, it's not a driver. It's a MS standard for providing fast access (direct access) to your video card. DirectX is an API that allows programmers to write one standard set of code to write directly to your video card. DirectX

acts as a layer between the program and your hardware. Thus, your video card needs DirectX capable drivers to be able to support DirectX. Make sense? A point to remember however, that not many people realise, is that DirectX doesn't make anything faster. Games aren't faster with DirectX than they would be in DOS, the purpose of DirectX is to reclaim that speed that you get in DOS but would normally lose under Windows. DirectX doesn't improve upon the situation, it rectifies a problem. If DirectX didn't exist programmers wouldn't be able to easily write directly to the video card whilst in Windows, and going through Windows is a very slow process (it wouldn't be fast enough for games like Quake). So although it's a much hyped standard for 'games', it's actually a product designed to bypass the way Windows handles video whilst still being in Windows. All for the sake of keeping users in Windows where everything is nice and friendly rather than dropping to DOS to play a game (DOS is the ultimate gaming platform!). However in all fairness DirectX, because it standardises things for the programmers, means programmers can get on with writing one routine for video access instead of many such routines and thereby get on with the business of writing games. This is a good thing. It's a similar situation with sound cards. Notice how DOS games have to support all those different sound cards and there are drivers for every single one? Well, until standards like the HMI drivers came along, games programmers had to write code for every single card they wanted to support. In Windows it's up to the sound card manufacturer to write drivers for Windows to use and programmers simply make standard calls that Windows understands to generate sound.

And no, your strange desktop activity isn't related to DirectX, but it does sound like a video driver problem so try re-installing them and see how you go.

Random Access

Welcome to Random Access, a column dedicated to interesting, useful and informative tips about anything and everything to do with your PC. Be it hardware, software, DOS or Windows you'll find tips and tricks listed here every month. If you have some tips of your own you'd like to share with other gamers such as yourself feel free to send your tip into Setup and, if we publish it, we'll be sure to credit and print your name.

DON'T CALL ME STUPID!

Is there anything more annoying than being treated like a complete idiot by your operating system? There probably is, but Microsoft doesn't want to be outdone so they ensured you'd feel as dumb as possible when using Windows 95, the bouncing 'Click here to begin' arrow being a prime example. Was it made for completely stupid people? If you found it helpful then... er... don't bother reading on.

Remove it thus:

Start REGEDIT (stupid people: type REGEDIT in the RUN box or from a DOS command prompt) and open
HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Policies\Explorer.

If it doesn't exist create a binary value called NoStartBanner and give it a value of 01 00 00 00.

Do the same for

HKEY_USERS\Default\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Policies\Explorer and the bouncing arrow will be no more.

Not stupid people: Always make a backup of your registry by copying the hidden and system files SYSTEM.DAT and USER.DAT before you edit the registry. Should anything untoward happen you can boot to DOS and replace the SYSTEM.DAT and USER.DAT files with your backups.

TAKE COMMAND

If you're like me you use a command prompt to do most file operations. A long time ago the smart lads at JPSoft realised that although the command prompt was a darn quick way of doing things, they could make it more darn quicker. Along came 4DOS. This nifty little program replaces the COMMAND.COM shell and has four hundred times the functionality. Going into a feature list here would be take a couple of pages, suffice to say once you start using 4DOS you never look back. The good news is that you can use 4DOS with Windows 95. You can load it in your AUTOEXEC.BAT to be executed in every DOS window you pull up, or you can replace COMMAND.COM completely and boot Windows 95 from 4DOS (the latter is preferred, otherwise you load the 4DOS shell from within the COMMAND.COM shell, two shells is a waste). If you choose the latter, just remember to add WIN to the end of your AUTOEXEC.BAT to actually start Windows automatically. The right command prompt will always outperform any GUI, as any UNIX user can tell you. It's worth checking out:

<http://www.jpsoft.com:80/>

SHIFTING GEAR WITH SHUTDOWN

It can be a real pain in that rear-ish area when you install new hardware, new drivers or new software and you have to reboot, going through all the hassle of a cold reset. Well, be hassled no more! When you select 'shutdown' from the Start menu just hold down SHIFT when you press 'Yes' and Windows 95 will just unload itself and re-start. Much quicker.

ORACLE

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DAY OF THE TENTACLE

? I'm stuck (supa-glued) on Day of the Tentacle. How do I get the gold, a water proof material, Ben's kite and find the vacuum cleaner with Hoagie? I've tried everything, even flushing spaghetti noodles down the toilet!

RUSSELL TUBMAN

GOSNELLS, WA

***** *Ok Russell, To get the gold, take the pen on the table, but they would catch you, You'll need to get rid of them, there is a smoke alarm on the mantle, they seem very concerned about fire. To start a fire, you'll need Jefferson's log.*

To get Jefferson's log, Make Washington look cold by getting his teeth to shake. Replace his current false teeth with the chattering teeth found in the convention hall in Bernard's time frame.

Now, before you ask, here's how you get the chattering teeth. Open the floor grate by the fireplace, then chase the teeth into the grate, and pick them up from there.

What?! You need more help? So now Washington won't take the teeth. Sigh, here's some more help. You need a cigar to remove Washington's teeth. Go to the novelty salesman in the convention hall in Bernard's time.

Sabotage the lighter so he can't use it! You need to switch the flag gun from Dwayne's room for the lighter gun in the convention hall. Dwayne's chair (on the door) is in the way you need to get Dwayne to leave, so Bernard can grab the gun.

To get Dwayne to leave, have Hoagie get the letter from the mailbox and give it to Bernard to give to Dwayne. Finally, get Hoagie to block the chimney, with Hancock's blanket (go up on the roof (through the attic) to do it). To get Ben's kite, Wash the carriage with brush, soap and water. The brush is in the cabinet in the wash-room where you found the bucket. The soap is on the maid's cart. In Washington's room, use the bed, pull the sash, then run out in the hall and pick up the soap off the cart. Get the waterproof kite material. The

lab coat in Red's workshop is water-proof. Give him the lab coat from the lab downstairs, then use the battery with the kite when Ben gives it to you. Push the kite when Ben says "Now". Then pick up the battery and plug in the Chron-o-John. Finally, the vacuum cleaner. It's simple, just have Hoagie use the vacuum cleaner flier from the lobby with the suggestion box.

BENEATH A STEEL SKY

? I am currently playing Beneath a Steel Sky and I'm really stuck! I have gone to every place possible and collected collectable except for the key and the bottle of lubricant in the store-room. When I take the key and lubricant and walk out the store-room with them, the man there searches me and takes the key and lubricant away from me! How do I keep it, what do I do once I've got it.

STUART KENNEDY

ADELAIDE, S.A.

***** *Well Stuart, that's one mighty problem you've got with the "key and lubricant" (let's hope their not connected somehow). Here's your answer!*

YOU DON'T NEED THEM! The WD40 and key are what you refer to as a "Red Herring".

NEVERHOOD

? We have bought the game the Neverhood and there is a part we can't get past.

We are in a room with cheese and chips on the wall. There is a projector with a picture on it and we don't know what it is? Also, there is a red computer screen which has all these symbols in it and a small button underneath. Please help!

KRISTY AND MATTHEW GREEN
AUGUSTA, W.A.

***** *Well Kristy and Matthew, all I can say is that clear questions lead to clear answers. I have to admit that I'm really not following your question. Here's my best guess then. There are squares that when placed into one of the many video players throughout the land will tell the story of The Neverhood and help you on your quest. Klaymen will automatically put all of the disks in his possession into the player when you click on it. To view them when you get to a video player, just click on the button in the center of the screen, and then*

The Neverhood



click on the disk you wish to view. Otherwise, you may be referring to the H room. That's the building with the H above the door and the ceiling fan. There's a brown box with a bunch of square pieces in it! You need to arrange the pieces into the shape of an H. The three brown pieces should be on the right. When you arrange them correctly a door to the right of you will open.

CHRONICLES OF THE SWORD

? I'm currently playing Chronicles of the Sword by Psynosis and have re-started so many times that I can't remember how many! I've found Merlin, got the Indictment to give to Morgana, given the porter his drink to get me into her rooms, but that's it! I've opened the iron gate and have the skull with the Ruby eyes and the gold goblet and knife, spoken to all and sundry. Please help, I'm about ready to trade this one in...

PAT GEE

LEONGATHA, VIC.

***** *Don't go selling it off yet Pat, try this. Go back to the castle and go right - there is a tankard under table. Go to smith's and fill it with ale from one of the barrels. Give the rubies to smith and then you will be able to get a helmet from the table (if there is no helmet on the table do it later when you will need it).*

Return to guard and give him tankard. Enter door. Talk to King Arthur. Give him scroll. Return to Merlin, talk with him, go to King Arthur and talk with him too. Now go back to the place where you gave a scroll to King Arthur (pick up a hel-

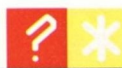
met by the way as mentioned above). Pick up scroll. Use helmet on door. Enter door. Talk with Morgana. Give her a scroll.

After cutscenes and talking to Merlin return to Morgana's room and get a vial of dragon's blood from table. Now go and talk with Wilf, Lancelot and King Arthur (one of this talks triggers events so you can leave Camelot after it). Return to the guard which you gave a tankard of ale and talk with him - he will return tankard. Go to the place where the guard of the Camelot gates was, exit. Go up. Go left. Use helmet on water. Back to the right. Go up. Use dragon's blood on door. Enter door. Right. Go to water. Use tankard on water. After combat (SET DIFFICULTY TO EASY) return to Merlin and give him tankard.

Go back to Guinevere's well but go left instead of right. Here take a horn. Go back to crossroads and go right to dragon's cave. Pick up a rock on the walkway. Use horn on cave entrance. Enter cave. Take an egg (this isn't the correct one). Go right. Take a branch (not egg) from the nest. Use helmet on the path above lava (near middle of the screen) - you fill it with sand. Use helmet on egg and then take eggshell from floor. Return to Merlin and give him eggshell. Go to faerie ring outside of the castle, pick up a red toadstool and use it on ring - you now can talk to faerie leader.

TOONSTRUCK

? I am playing Toonstruck and am up to the part where you are captured in the dungeon on CD2. I have found a door



with a CLOWN face and just can't get in because the puzzle is so hard and very frustrating. Can you please help, I really want to finish this game!

BILL TRAN

YAGOONA, NSW

***** Well Bill, you should be in a cell with no items. Talk to snout. He'll turn around, letting you look at the mat. Take the crystal. Take the mat. Use the mat on drew to make a dust cloud and remove the guard. Take the key from the wall behind you and use it on the key-hole. Move far right and use the exit (the bird gives you clues to a bookshelf puzzle upstairs). Click on the Clown. You're going to have to use your noggin though, this puzzle is different every time so you'll have to do it yourself. Copy the clowns features in order (it's really just like simple Simon). It's even easier if you write them down as you go along. Once in, have a chat with the clown. Can't do more here yet. Go up the stairs. Go right - the chequered floor. Here is the book puzzle the minah bird downstairs gave the clues for. Click on the book case. The correct order is: B1,R1,R3,B2,B3,R4,R2,B4. Go through the passage that opens. Use the music box on yourself to make the guard sleep. Use the monitor. Look at all the channels by using the dial. Before leaving put it onto the channel showing the room upstairs with the knight and chequered floor. Now use the magnet on the bolted plate on the ceiling. The screen you get lets you move the knight around. Move him onto the raised tiles. The 4th tile you get to raises the gate.

You're not ready to go up from the knight hallway yet so go back to the main stairway. To the left of the 2nd stairway is a guards rec. room. Upstairs are more guards. Whilst on the 2nd floor landing, click on the left gargoyle to get another crystal. There is another on the right, but you can't get it yet. Go back to the dungeon. Head north from the cell you were locked in to get to the climatron room. Press the button on the air circulator to open it. Go in. Use the fly costume on yourself to climb up.

KINGS QUEST 6

? I have been playing Kings Quest 6 and am having some trouble with it. I have the magic Map and can travel to the islands. On the Isle of Wonder, I can't get the bookworm to give me a rare book.

On the isle of the Sacred Mountain, I am up to the trap in the Catacombs where the roof falls

in but cannot pass it. I also cannot get past the bubbling pool on the Isle of Beast. Please help me!

MICHAEL MONTAGUE

EAST FREEMANTLE, W.A.

***** A Montague - be restless not for ye answers are sure and straight. Just let not the poison of your despair thy lips partake. After the gnomes leave, you should notice a partial sentence floating at the edge of the shore, retrieve it. You then goes to the realm of bookworm and the spelling bees. When you try to get a book, you're met by Bookworm, who refuses to give you a book until you can offer something "interesting" in exchange. Walks to the amazing garden (beyond the swamp,) and take an iceberg lettuce, and journey on until you're at the entrance to Chessboard Land. Two feuding queens ask for advice on the matter of which queen shall have the "privilege" of presenting Cassima with a lump of coal at her wedding, and which will be left with the spoiled egg. As the red queen leaves, she drops a scarf, get it. Return to the shore, and use the map to go to the Isle of the Beast. There's a creature that is half opossum and half dragon. Talks to the creature, and then offers the partial sentence to it. The creature decides to travel with you, journey on until you encounter a boiling pond. Tosses the iceberg lettuce into it. Take the old lamp on the other side. Go until you see a man working on a garden, and a stone archer which follows his movements. Although the man invites you to come into the garden, note the gold glint in his eyes, don't trust him. Take the brick.

Return to the Isle of Wonder (use map) with the creature from the Isle of the Beast (who turns out to be a Dangling Participle) to the Bookworm, who will give you a rare book in exchange.

Bubbling pool problem, see lettuce. In the Catacombs, you need the following objects... The Red Scarf from Chessboard Land on the Isle of Wonder, the Hole-in-the-Wall from the Garden on the Isle of Wonder, the Brick from the Stone Archer scene on the Isle of the Beast, and the Tinderbox from the pawn shop on the Isle of the Crown.

To stop the ceiling, throw the Brick found in the garden scene on the Isle of the Beast into the gears of the machine, it will stop.

RIDDLE OF MASTER LU

? Oh great, great Oracle, please help me! In the Riddle of Master Lu, I have to wet

down a particular rock on Easter Island, but I don't know how! Please Help.

JOEL

SYDNEY, NSW

***** Tis easy Joel, just do this! At the Quarry find the rocks in the center of the stick/shell map. The symbols (starfish, seahorse, shark tooth, scallop) can be found on various stone heads in the quarry. Use the map and these four heads as a guide to locate the rocks - a large red boulder and a small grey rock in front of it. Try moving the small rock. Return to the beach. Use the pull cord to plug one end of the whale bone. Fill the whale bone with water from the ocean. Use the water on the clay in front of the small grey rock. Move the rock. Take the rongorongo tablet from the fissure in the large red boulder.

Here's a little more help while I'm at it. Rig a trap for the bad guys inside the shed. Enter the shed through the window. Take the spark plug. Use the spark plug to loosen the gas tank plug. Use the pull cord on the wire. Use the pull cord on the gas tank plug. Take the gas tank cap. Light the lighter. Put the lit lighter on the floor near where the gas will run out. Pull the power cable to create a disturbance. Get out the window fast! Enjoy your little romantic interlude with Samantha before heading back to Peru.

ULTIMA 7

? I'm stuck in Ultima 7. How do you solve the puzzle inside the cube generator that involves walkways and bridges? I'm trying to follow Elizabeth and Abraham to Buccaneer's Den.

JEFFREY ENGERT

WANGI WANGI, NSW

***** Sorry Jeffrey, there's no definite solution for you. You'll have to nut it out yourself. The puzzle basically involves walking on cer-

tain spots of the walkway that trigger the bridges to other parts. Trouble is, some spots remove other bridges as well. The easiest way is to just save the game a lot.

It's hard, but not impossible. Look out for the fire fields and fireballs. Another hint: you'll cover almost 100% of the walkways before you're able to get to the center. After the Cube crumbles, take the little cube and head to Buccaneer's Den.

RAVENLOFT

? Please hear my call of help! I'm having trouble in Ravenloft! Where do I find the Ghoul Lord and where do I find the cemetery? Also, In the church, where do I find the pieces of the page to free the mirror?

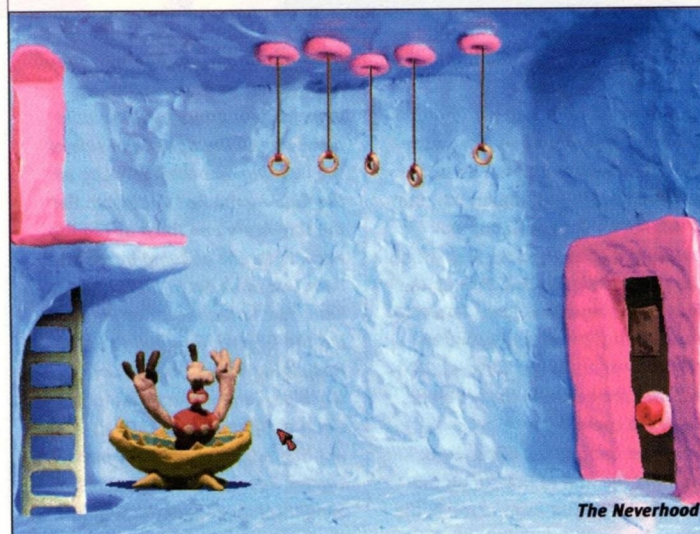
ARRAN COOK

W.A.

***** Ok Arran, from the caves west of Barovia, Go the wooded area. At the entrance to the caves, talk to the NPC cleric and have her join the party. Drop one of your other NPCs. Enter the caves. Use the Entry Seal by the first portal. An NPC fighter will not let you pass unless he joins your party. Drop the other NPC (not the cleric). Find the four jade keys to make your way to the Church Vestibule Key. Pick it up. You will not be able to pass though the last barrier unless you have the NPC cleric with you. Find the portal and go through it. Both NPC party members will take off. The wizard in the building in the woods west of Barovia is quite a strong magic user, so he may be a good choice as a party member. Return to Barovia and pick up NPCs to make a party of four again. Take the easternmost exit on the northern wall of Barovia and enter the church grounds.

OLD CHURCH MAIN FLOOR

Enter the church. Use the Vestibule Key on the circular lock by the first door. Kill the hell hounds. Pick up



The Neverhood

the Instruction to the Catalogue, Special Scroll of Cure Disease and Tome of Cursed Items. Read the Instruction to the Catalogue. You need the following items to return home:

- The Catalogue from the Old Church
- The red gem from the ghost's house
- The crown from the dead elven warrior
- The feather from the Wereraven
- The Tarot card from Castle Ravenloft, and
- The Holy Symbol of Helm

Collecting these items are the minimum you have to do to complete the game. Try talking to the mirror. Go downstairs.

OLD CHURCH LOWER LEVEL 1

Find the Gold Church Key which will open some doors on this level. Find the four fragments and insert them into the Tome of Cursed Items. Find the Special Scrolls of Remove Curse and Atonement, and the Trimia Catalogue. Return to the main floor. Read the Tome by the mirror and to free the soul of the old cleric. Talk to

ghost will leave you and give you a key which will open the door in the ghost's house. Wait to collect the gem until you next visit the village. Get the two pouches of Golden Dust. Go to the mausoleum in the south eastern corner. Use a pouch of golden dust by one of the statues standing outside the door of the mausoleum. Talk to her and ask her to bless you. She will not do so yet, so go to the other statue on the other side of the door and use the other pouch of dust. Talk to the second spirit and ask her to bless you. Talk again to the first spirit and ask her to bless you. The banshee inside the mausoleum will now be gone. Enter the Elven Warrior's Crypt.

NORMALITY

? I am stuck in the "furniture factory" in Normality what do I do? Also how do you get onto the shop floor past the guard. I also can't light the blow torch to open the container door outside the factory.

LEIGH SCOPES
CASTLEMAINE, VIC.

radio). Get the Car/Automobile Battery by the stairs. Go up the stairs and get the Slumber Manual on the floor (and read it). Use the Current Receiver on the bare electrical wires by the bed. Use the Current Sender on the Battery. Use the Battery/Current Sender combination on the Current Receiver. Go to the Toilet (in the game I hasten to add!). Stand on the Toilet and use the Air Vent From the Air Vent go forward and take the first left. Follow the tunnel round until you find a belt. Get the belt from the Air Vent and go forward. Take the first right, follow the tunnel round until you come to a second Air Vent. Look down and Use the Alarm Case to get the Debris. Leave the ventilation system from where you came in and go to Changing Room 1. Talk to the Tester. In the same room look for some lockers with "Tubby" written on them and open the fourth locker along (2nd down). Get the books in the locker and Examine them. Go back to the empty bed and put the Debris on it. Go to the Grinders (past the mock living area), read the Manual on the

floor by the Extinguisher. Use the Belt with the Extinguisher. Use the Extinguisher. Get the Extinguisher. Use the Control Box. Use the Middle Grinder. Talk Heather and get your mission orders. Use the Extinguisher on one of the paint drums around the back of the factory. Use the Map to get to the Mint Mall. You don't need to use the blow torch yet. Eventually, you just use the matches on it.

THE DIG

? I have been playing The Dig now for about 6

months! What do I have to do to get Maggie to come to me? I can get into the tomb and the pyramid but don't know what else to do!

JAMES DOBBIN
BROKEN HILL, NSW

* Get Maggie to come to me! Very descriptive James, where, in what circumstances? Blow it, I'll put as much effort into the answer as you did with the question! If you're referring to Maggie in the library, leave here there - look at the consoles and leave. If you're referring to rescuing her, here's how you do it. Head for the map spire and go to the

nest. Assess the situation. You need Brink. So head back to the tomb spire. Go to the cave interior and use the flashlight on the bat creatures. Head out to the platform and steal Brink's crystal stash.

Brink now cooperates with Boston. Return to the nest and Brink will accompany you. Talk to Brink about the monster and he suggests a plan. Go up to the falls source. Push the rock. Return to the nest and Boston explains what he has done. Talk to Brink about the grate. This invokes the sequence that rescues Maggie. After this, Brink demands his life crystals back, takes all of them and runs off.

Lead Maggie back across the light bridges to the museum spire and fetch more life crystals from behind the weakened, now broken, door. Then go across the light bridges to the tomb spire.

MANIAC MANSION

? I know you will scream over this game because it's a LucasArts game (Maniac Mansion), but I just want to know what to feed the man eating plant?

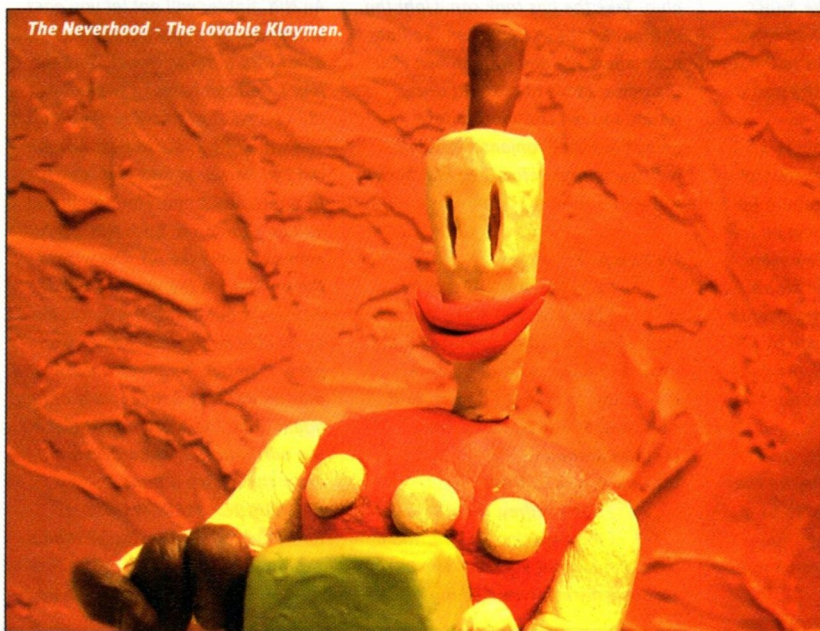
SHANE ODMARK
ALBION PARK, NSW

* Shane, good on ya for playing one of the true classics. Fear not, Maniac Mansion isn't on the Oracle "Slander asker" list. Here's your answer.

To get Edna out of her room, wait outside her room (Bernard), and switch to Dave. Use the newly repaired phone in the library and dial the above number. As soon as it rings, switch to Bernard and enter the room. Head over to the nightstand and get the small key, then go up the ladder. Turn on the light and examine room, open the painting and you will discover the safe.

Switch to Dave and phone Edna again, quickly get Bernard out of the room. Close Edna's door on the way out, go into the Radio room and wait. Then go to the plant room and use jar of water with man eating plant, then use can of Pepsi with plant. As it is full, it is now safe, go over and climb through the hatch which leads to the telescope.

To get the Pepsi, way back at the beginning of the game, Get Bernard to open the door next to the Grandfather clock. You are now in the kitchen. Should you come across Edna here, you will end up in the dungeon. If this happens, get another person like Dave caught, and Dave can push the loose brick under the barred window while Bernard escapes. Assuming all is well, have Bernard get the flashlight on the counter, then go east, open refrigerator, pick up Pepsi.



The Neverhood - The lovable Klaymen.

the cleric. Ask him for the key to the cemetery.

CEMETERY

Leave and return to Barovia. Go to the house with the ghost. He will possess one of your characters, but it will not hinder you in any way unless you stray from the task which the ghost assigned you. Pick up the Bone Vault key then leave. Return to the church grounds and open the cemetery doors in the northeast corner with the key from the old cleric. Enter the cemetery.

Go to the tomb of the Ghoul Lord. Kill him. Get the Rod of Rebirth off the ground. When you exit the tomb, the

* Rightio Leigh, Here's the entire factory solution.

Examine foot prints by the middle dumpster on the right hand side of the building. Get the Rusty Cog on the floor by the Red Container. Get the Oxy-Acetylene Torch by the furnace. Enter the building by the front door Use the 'I am fat' T-Shirt on Kent. Talk to the receptionist [point out the T-Shirt]. Go through to the Hospitality Niche. Use the Coffee Machine/Contemporary Sculpture Get the coffee. Talk to Tiddler. Get the radio (you will only need the Current Receiver). Get the Current Sender (plugged into the wall by the



CODE

A SPECIAL CARING PAGE FOR CLUELESS NEWBIES

BLADE WARRIOR

Just type "**self healing**" then the vitality will be filled to the end of the bar.

KILLING TIME

SCOOBYSNACK = 200% Energy

IDKFA = Instant death

OPENSEZME = Open door

BODYBAGS = Kill enemies

IAMAPOOPHEAD = God

WHOOOPDANG = All weapons and ammo

Unknown functions, have fun!

BURGER

EDGE

STRYDER

CRYPTO

MAD DOG

CHOW YUN FAT

JOHN WOO

GARYLAKE

MOTO RACER

When the system asks for a name, type in one of the following. The game will beep and ask for your name again, now you can type in your real name with the feature enabled.

CDNALSI = All tracks enabled

CTEKCOP = Pocket bikes

CESREVER = Reverse all the courses

QUAKE MISSION PACK 2

Level skip: **RxMy**

x = the episode number

y = the level number.

ie. The last level is R2M8

NEED FOR SPEED 2

In ANY screen type these codes:

hollywood = Bonus Track

pioneer = gives all secret cars a very powerful engine

bus = the yellow school bus

semi = the big truck with no trailer

armytruck = the army truck

vwbug = the VW Beetle

volvo = the Volvo station wagon

bmw = the bmw

mercedes = the mercedes

miata = the Madza Miata

jeepjy = the Jeep YJ

quattro = the Audi Quattro

vanagon = the VW Combi

landcruiser = the Toyota Landcruiser

SHADOW WARRIOR SHAREWARE

Press 'T' and then enter the code.

SWCHAN = Toggle god mode

SWGIMME = Gives you all items

SWGRED = Enable every cheat

SWTREKxy = Warp to level (x=episode [0=first], y=level [1 = first])

SWLOC = Display framerate in upperleft corner

SWRES = Change resolution

SWSTART = Restart level

SWGHOST = Toggle clipping mode

SWMAP = Toggle automap

CONFIG = Displays "help config" (?)

QUIT = Quits game

CLEAR = Appears to do nothing (?)

SWTRIX = Turn on Bunny Rockets w/ Rocket launcher (#5)

SWNAME = Appears to do nothing (?)

DUMPSOUNDS = Says "dumped sounds to dbg.foo" and creates that file

SOUND = Says "help sound"

SWWAVE = Appears to do nothing (?)

WINPACHINKO = Lets u win the pachinko game and get an item

PROJECT PARADISE

Press "**P**" for Pause then

type in following codes

MAGIC = All Spells

METAL = All Weapons

EVIL = All PowerUps available

Level Codes

HELLGATE

DREAM EVIL

DEMON

BLACK SUN

BOGART

FIRESPELL

PANDEMONIUM

CYBERSPACE

QUIVER

The following cheats work in the shareware version

WUSS = God mode. Enemies guys can't hurt you

NUKE = Kills all enemies

MMAP = On automap (TAB) will display entire map

The following cheats work in the Registered version:

WUSS = God mode enemies can't hurt you

NUKE = Kills all enemies

MMAP = On automap (TAB) will display entire map

PANSY = All weapons, all ammo

BUTTHEAD = All keys, all objectives

STUN = Temporarily stuns enemies

WARP = jumps to a specific level.

General Tip

On episode 1 Level 1 find the secret room in the area where you first start. Watch for a ceiling light. Space bar will open the secret area. Here you will find many weapons, making the rest of Level 1 a breeze.

STREET RACER

Go to the GAME OPTIONS and for the option

"**Cup Password**" use the following codes.

TRAFIK = SILVER CUP

NEJATI = GOLD CUP

DOUGAL = PLATINUM CUP

TURGAY = ADVANCE OPTIONS/SECRET LEVEL and CHARACTERS



G-NOME

At the Mission computer (where you can select Game, Options, etc) press **ctrl+F1**.

From there, enter one or more of the following codes. All the codes are case sensitive with correct codes confirmed by a beep.

Redtop Trod = Select all single player missions from the mission Menu.

Mystery cheats! We haven't tested these, so go wild! Who knows what could happen...

Half Libel = ???

Had A Nude On = ???

Brass Clue = ???

Mother Mourn Us = ???

Chaste Coed = View the end video sequences.

Rotted Drop = ???

Horny Elk Leer = ???

O'Sarge = ???

Swiss Throat = ???

A Mere Fart = ???

A Scramble On = ???

CTRL+I = Activates Invincibility

CTRL+Z = Refills ammo

CTRL+F = Destroy current target

IMPERIUM GALACTICA

While in the game hold down **SHIFT**, and type **KAROLY** to activate the cheat codes. Then just hit the correct key to activate a cheat.

c = all colonies, and inventions

c = second time gives you cheats on planets

v = +100,000 credits

5 = Rank 1 (LT)

6 = Rank 2 (CPT)

7 = Rank 3 (CMDR)

8 = Rank 4 (ADM)

9 = Rank 5 (Gr ADM)

There are some side effects to using cheat codes. For instance, When the cheat codes are activated in IG there are some minor graphical glitches in the lower left hand corner of the game. These appear to be 4 flashing "o"s stacked on top of each other. Also the story line gets out of whack if you skip levels. If you increase your rank to 5, you will see the map to the whole galaxy. If you move your fleet to an area you are not supposed to be in yet, and reduce your rank back to 1, you will lose your fleet.

If you are having a problem with the game due to the use of cheat codes, you will have to load a saved game from before you cheated or start a new game.



Are you experienced?

COMMAND & CONQUER

HACKS AND EDITORS

All of the Power, none of the responsibility

by Dan Cohen

Have you finished Command & Conquer: Red Alert as both the Allied and Soviet armies? Are you stuck on a mission and you refuse to play anymore? Or are you a traditionalist and wish that you could use the units from Command & Conquer II?

With the following ingredients you can expand Command & Conquer: Red Alert beyond your wildest imagination; a PC (a Pentium is ideal), a Command & Conquer: Red Alert CD-ROM, A modem (28.8k bps or better recommended), and a connection to an Internet Service Provider. With these tools you can access a vast array of patches, editors, extra missions and online battles that are flaring up 24 hours a day. This will (once again) ensure that your Command & Conquer: Red Alert CD will not venture too far away from your CD-ROM drive.

Welcome to the Next Level

There are countless new levels available on the internet, and there are more appearing daily as this craze turns into a cult. There are countless individual levels to download which are very small (around 10k) and take just seconds to download, or you can download a compilation of 20 or more individual levels (about 150k - 1 to 2 minutes to download). Some Red Alert fanatics have created entire scenarios, involving several mission levels, an overall plot, a brief-

ing for each mission and cut scenes from the Command & Conquer: Red Alert CD. These people have spent more time on this game than just playing!

The files you download are usually compressed using the 'zip' format. To decompress the files you will need one of two popular windows utilities - WinZip or Stuffit Expander for Windows 95. The installation procedure can vary for each of the various add-ons you download and can be fairly tricky, so be sure to read the text file enclosed with each of the archives carefully.

Important Note - It is unlikely that all of these files have been checked for viruses before they are placed online. Please be sure to regularly scan your computer for viruses, particularly if you are downloading files from the internet.

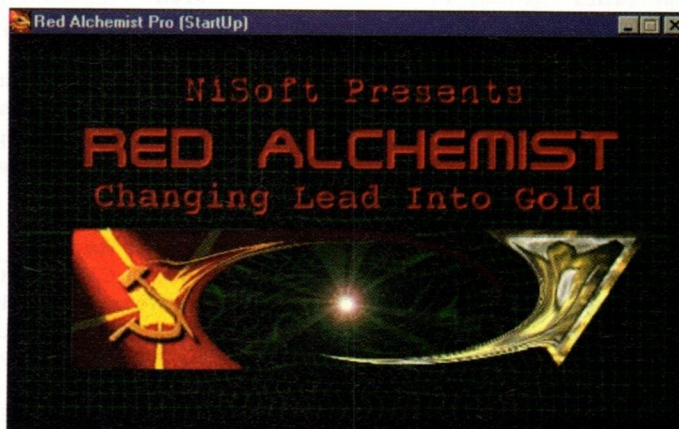
Patched up and ready to go!

There are numerous patches available for Command & Conquer: Red Alert. One such patch file is called "ultRA" (Ultimate Red Alert - <http://ultra.gamestats.com/>), which was created because the author wasn't satisfied with the final job from the authors of Red Alert, Westwood Studios. 'ultRA' works in single player and skirmish modes, but it is essentially created for using in multi-player mode. 'ultRA' is the most impressive patch that I found; it decompresses straight into your Red Alert directory using a WinZip self extractor, and contains a batch file that when run, loads the ultRA files before

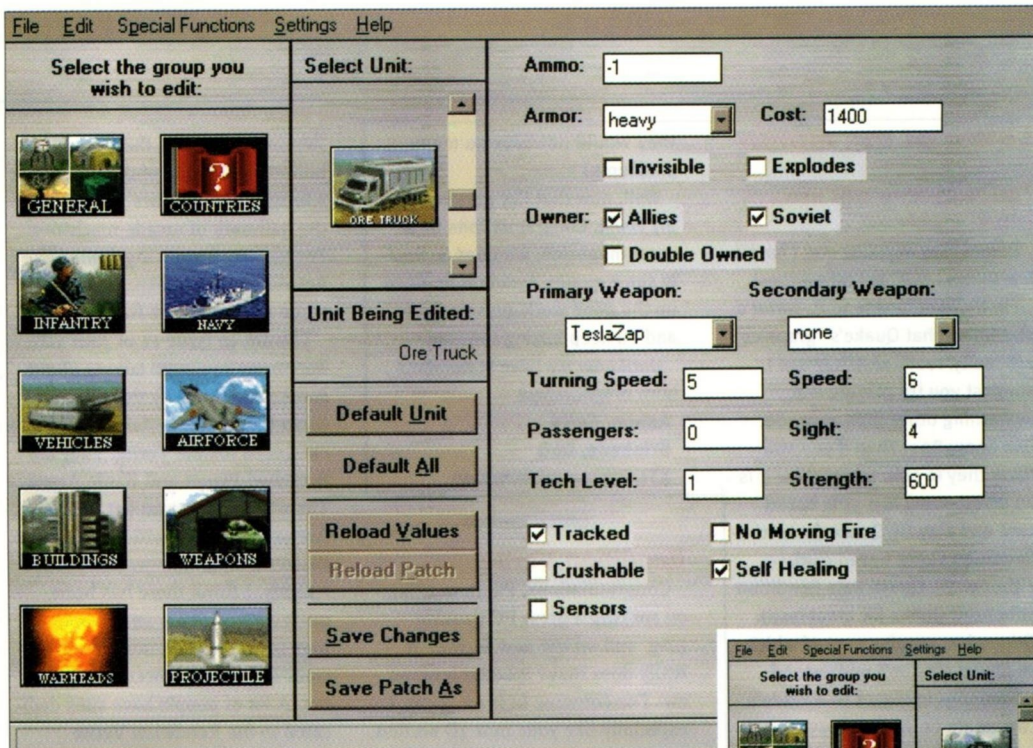
launching Red Alert, and will remove them once you are finished playing. 'ultRA' is 2.9 megabytes and should take approximately 20 minutes on a 33.6k modem. Other patches can allow things such as hospitals, armed harvesters, enhanced unit speed and increased hit points for any item within the game. Once again, when you download these add-ons read the text file that comes with it for a brief explanation and instructions on how to active the changes. The text file will also let you know whether the file is intended for DOS or Windows use, but the majority of files will work on either, or there are alternate versions for either platform. Not all of the patches work, some of them froze my computer or crashed Red Alert. Although this was annoying I did not suffer any long term consequences from these crashes.

D.I.Y. Maps/Levels/Scenarios

Now that you have witnessed the efforts of many of the other Red Alert 'hacks', why not give it a try yourself. To start with you need a map - you can use an existing map, or you can use EdWin which comes with the Red Alert installation. With EdWin you can edit any existing map (it must be in the Red Alert directory) or you can start your own from scratch using the massive library of ground textures provided. There are other editors available that do more than just edit maps; Red Alchemist (<http://users.aol.com/commandhq/ra/main.html>) - This program gives you a very simple point and click overview of nearly every variable in the game, allowing you to change such things as hit points for units and buildings, the speed at which units recharge/rearm, adding weapons to existing units and much more. This is a must-get for anyone interested in getting involved with editing rules. It's smaller than the other files (736k), and a lot easier to operate.



Got Red Alert? On the Net? Go here!



Pushing the value envelope. \$89.95 never bought so much

RedEdit

(<http://www.geocities.com/TimesSquare/5524/redalert.html>) - This program is Shareware and is around 1 megabyte compressed. With this program you can change just about anything, but the mixture of windows and DOS makes it rather clumsy to use.

R.A.C.K. - Red Alert Construction Kit

(<http://www.geocities.com/TimesSquare/Arcade/5533/rack.html>) - This editor seems to be fairly powerful, but the lack of documentation makes it difficult to use. It downloads each of the individual graphic icons to your hard disk and yet edits the maps in a very close grid, placing buildings, units or terrain. R.A.C.K. will also allow you to create and edit rules.ini files.

In some cases people have extracted the cut scenes from the Red Alert CD-ROM and used them to enhance their multi-level add-on into a scenario. This can be done

by using a very small DOS-based utility called 'Anima', which accesses the movie files from the CD, and if you wish you can save it to your hard disk.

M.P.O.G. - Multi-Player Online Gaming

Red Alert can be played live online with up to 3 other players from around the world. Before we launch into a multi-player game we have to connect to a server to find a willing opponent (or opponents), and that requires some extra software. One such method is to use Westwood Chat, which is installed after the main installation. If (like me) you chose not to install Westwood Chat during the installation, you can download Westwood Chat from <http://www.westwood.com>. To use Westwood Chat, choose 'Internet Game' from the main menu within Command & Conquer: Red Alert.

The other software options for

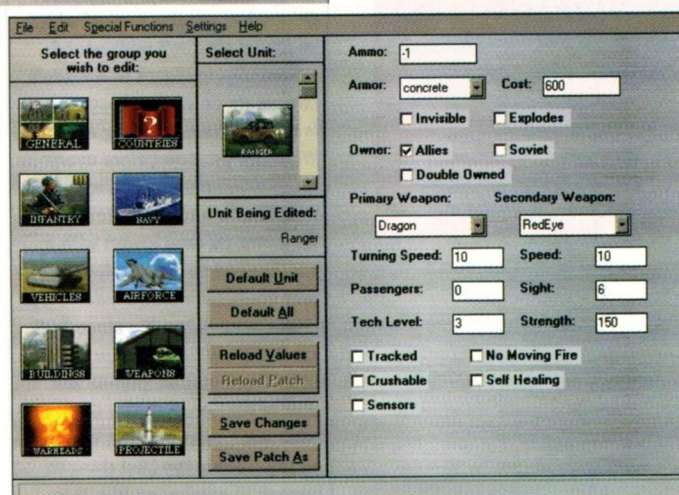
country they will represent in the upcoming battle. One user chooses to start a game, the other(s) select the game and then click 'Join'. Once all of the combatants are present, the game owner clicks 'Start' and then? Well, it's on for young and old!! Remember, the enemy now thinks, behaves and acts just like you - or do they?

Red Alert Web Sites

Here are some web sites that are full of information, updates and patch files.

Westwood Studios -

(<http://www.westwood.com>) The creators of the C&C series. This page has the latest updates, news and events.



A tool for tools to tool around with

MPOG are Kahn (<http://www.stargatenetworks.com>) and Kali (<http://www.kali.net>). These programs fool Red Alert into thinking you are on an ordinary IPX network, and using either program you connect to any one of a number of servers and strike up a challenge. Essentially both programs do the same thing, but both have limited functionality in their shareware form (read the enclosed documentation for the exact details of the respective shareware licences). Once you are connected to a games server, it's simply a matter of baiting other eager users from around the world to a challenge. When you have beaten your war drums loud enough you make your way into Red Alert and select 'Multiplayer Game' and then 'Network' (Note - do not use 'Internet Game' if you are using Kahn or Kali). When you enter network mode you will be placed in 'The Lobby', where players meet and select what colour and

The Red Alert Outpost -

(<http://www.mother.com/~erichull>) A very informative page including some great add ons and references

The Tesla Coil -

(<http://www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/Pines/5268/>) Another fanatic Red Alert home page. You will find the latest patches and information about Red Alert events.

The Chronosphere -

<http://www.igl.net/ra/>

Blitz's Red Alert Page -

(<http://www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~alpat/red.htm>) The home site for 'Blitz Rules'. Contains the very useful 'Red Alert Construction Guide' for creating missions.

The Ultimate Red Alert Site-

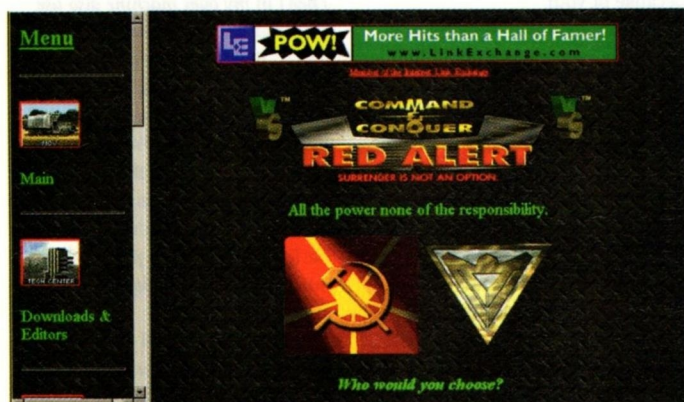
(<http://www.gamestats.com/ultra.htm>) The home for Ultimate Red Alert. Latest patches, information and contests.

Kahn MPOG Software -

(<http://www.stargatenetworks.com/>) Download the latest Kahn.

Kali MPOG Software -

(<http://www.kali.net>) Home site for Kali internet gaming software.



Type "Red +Alert" in your search engine and use your 20 hours a month checking out 1% of them

LETTERS

write to PC PowerPlay
LETTERS
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NEW THING:

Letter of the month!
Win a subscription!

Each month we'll choose a letter that we think is THE BEST that month. Not the funniest (although we reserve the right to hand out a freebie if a letter makes us laugh HARD), but the most intelligent, the most incisive, the most informed. The winner gets a **FREE 6 MONTH SUBSCRIPTION!** Existing subscribers get 6 months added to their term. How good is that!

Letter of the Month

Ignorance is not always bliss

Before I say anything else I have a few things I must get off my chest.

Firstly, in response to P. Gorter's statement that Quake's "graphics are really, really shit!". Might I suggest you try playing it at something other than 320x200, like 640x480+. Then if you still think they're shit, invest (Yes! It is an investment) in a 3Dfx based card and play GL Quake (or even a Rendition Verite based card, although GL Quake eats Rendition enhanced Quake for breakfast!). Otherwise, speak ye not of which ye obviously don't understand.

Secondly, in regard to A Wade's comments on Windows 95. There is nothing (really) wrong with Windows 95. Now before everyone starts screaming, I used to be a DOS fanatic and absolutely hated Windows 3.x (and lower) with a passion and so was obviously very sceptical about Windows 95. I have been using PCs since DOS 1.0 (before Windows even existed, when 640k was all anyone will ever need! Hahahahaha! Good one Bill!) and I must say that Windows 95 is probably the best thing to happen to gaming on PCs. It is technically superior (In most aspects) and allows developers to create games that would just be too time consuming to develop under DOS. For example, how many 3D enhanced titles do you see running under DOS as compared to Windows 95? Not many! It is simply too much effort to support the various hardware accelerators there are out there, whereas under Windows 95 it is just a matter of writing to Direct3D or the appropriate device driver.

Now, I still use DOS on my machine for older games and new ones that aren't Windows 95 native. And no it is not reboot to DOS mode or press F4 to boot to old OS. It is DOS 7.x that lurks underneath Windows 95, which it is quite easy to setup a multiple boot config.sys to boot to either Windows 95 or DOS 7.x. (E-Mail me if you want to know how, or I could be persuaded to submit an article to Random Access if there is enough interest).

Finally, maybe if more people actually bothered to learn how to use their computer's OS properly

they would not have so many problems?

Well, now that I've gotten that off my chest. Congratulations on a great magazine. It's good to finally see a quality Aussie mag. Keep up the good work guys and gals and I'll keep buying the mag.

Until next we have statements born of ignorance!

Ashley Guild
Brisbane, QLD
XTC@m140.aone.net.au

Rendition Verite

Congratulations, PC PowerPlay on making a great PC gaming mag, and on the new format, it really does make it better looking, etc. The contents in it are great, I especially like your new 3D section, but I have a few gripes with the way you handle the 3D Cards. Mostly the Voodoo Graphics 3Dfx and the Rendition Verite.

To me it looks as though for some strange reason you are a tad biased, and you prefer the 3Dfx. I say this because you keep saying how Tomb Raider and Quake are enhanced with the 3Dfx chipset, and I haven't heard you once say that they are also enhanced with the Verite. The current Quake or Vquake (Verite Quake) as it's called for the Verite, is quite good and a lot better than the normal version but isn't as good as the GL version of Quake, simply because the GL drivers for the Verite chipset are not yet finished. They are being done as I write this, and will probably be done by the time this letter is printed (hopefully it will be printed). Tomb Raider for the Verite is simply stunning and I think it looks just the same as on the 3Dfx.

Secondly, the other reason I think that you are wrong was because of your

Formula 1 review, you kept saying about how it's enhanced for the 3Dfx, and saying that you NEED one for the game to work. WRONG!!!! It is also enhanced for the Verite and looks great. I think you may have been playing a beta version of the game and only the 3Dfx part of the game was finished or close to being finished. As the game is clearly Rendition Ready, straight from the box, and here are some quotes straight from Psygnosis: "Psygnosis is convinced that with technology such as

Rendition's Verite, the PC is becoming capable of displaying the stunning 3D graphics which are the hallmark of arcade machines. For blazing fast racing games like Formula 1, this means that our game design can be fully realised."

Thirdly, in issue 12 of your 3D Technews you were talking about games enhanced by the 3Dfx, 2 of them I know for certain are also enhanced for the Verite. They are Scorched Planet and Battle Arena Toshinden (you even get Battle Arena Toshinden with the 3D Blaster PCI!!).

Lastly, I think there has been quite a lot of news, and happenings concerning Rendition especially if you're connected to the net. A lot of people have sites dedicated to the Rendition Verite chipset, and if you pop by Rendition's, and there is even a Game Park where arcade video games are supported by the Rendition. They need high quality, stunning graphics at good speed, and Rendition fits the description.

Thanks,

Luke "Poona" Peterson
Mooroolbark, Victoria
Nellson@onaustalia.com.au

Regarding Formula 1 from Psygnosis, you're right and we're wrong. The info we had from Psygnosis at the time of printing was that the game would only support 3Dfx. The final release supports: 3Dfx, Rendition, Matrox Mystique and 3D Labs Permedia.

In respect to our alleged bias towards the 3Dfx, we see ALL the games that are 3D accelerated running on ALL the supported systems and the simple truth is that the 3Dfx versions look considerably better than their Rendition equivalents. That said, we use a Rendition Verite (a 3D Blaster) as the main video card in the PC PowerPlay office machine, I (Ben) in my own machine also use the Rendition as the main card and I love it. Both machines also have a 3Dfx installed. Reason: nothing is faster than a Rendition for non-optimised 3D games like F1GP2, and it's a nice feeling to know that your system will support whatever a game needs... The Rendition's programmable RISC core inspires faith for the future of the card, as does the excellent driver support.

The Rendition is still a major contender in the 3D market, going back to PowerPlay #8 we rated it the best 3D accelerator available. That was

before the 3Dfx appeared though, and our subsequent tests in issue #10 showed the 3Dfx to be the superior 3D solution. We don't regard the "3D Race" as anywhere near over and will continue to give you every bit of info we get on this most important development in PC gaming.

DOS lives!

I'd just like to say how much I love your magazine. I was shocked when I saw your first issue at the newsagent. An Australian magazine that covered PC games, and only PC games. It was great. But I have a point to make in this letter. Simply put, Win '95 sucks. It was the worst gaming environment I have used in years. It's so slow and useless. You need a processor that hasn't even conceived yet to run the bloody thing, and if you don't want General Protection Faults every five minutes you need to buy a crate of RAM chips. For example, My Grandparents recently bought a P100 with 16 meg of RAM, and Win 95 (the useable job back then) and they also got a scanner.

That was fine, unless you wanted to scan something. Getting the picture wasn't the problem, editing it was! If you wanted to sharpen it, or double its size, you'd set it off, and you can go mow the lawn, have a shower, eat lunch and watch a movie in full before it will have finished its task. Then I got the same program they were using for editing and put it on my P166, 32 meg of RAM, Win 3.11 and DOS 6.22. And it takes a matter of seconds for a picture 'round 60KB to sharpen, when on the Win 95 machine it would take around 10 minutes. I know what your thinking, "of course it's faster, he's got a faster computer". Sure, but 10 times faster! I don't think so! Why can't we just use DOS for 10 more years?

I also hate the way Microsoft control the game industry by making all the cool games Win 95 only. I can't keep count of all the Win 95 only games I've missed out on. And now, by the sound of it, I can't get a 3D accelerator because I can't use Direct X or Direct 3D. Bill Gates probably hasn't touched a computer in a decade. He obviously didn't write Win 95. Let's hope Win 97 is worth the wait, and is much improved for the sake of the industry.

Anyhow, thanks a lot and see you in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Douglas
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Forget everything you've heard about Win 95 - it NEEDS 32Mb RAM minimum. Anything less and you're asking for trouble. Try upgrading the P100 (RAM is stupidly cheap right now, no excuses!) to 32Mb and see what a difference it makes.

I think you demonstrated clearly where you're coming from in your last paragraph. It's not Microsoft that make "the cool games Win 95 only" - developers can make their new games for whatever platform they choose. Most choose Win 95 - does that not tell you something? As for all the games you've "missed out on", your P166, 32Mb is a fine Win 95 platform, and if you insist on maintaining this stand simply because "Win '95 sucks" then power be to you comrade, you keep the faith while the rest of us get on with enjoying amazing new games that don't need any configuration grief. You "can't get a 3D accelerator because I can't use Direct X or Direct 3D", well, get Win 95 and you'll no longer have this problem, simple really.

Oh, and "Bill Gates probably hasn't touched a computer in a decade"... Yeah, good one!

Full thrust

I have read your recent review of controllers and want to give you MY opinion of the Thrustmaster steering wheels. I actually have the T1 and have not used any other. Not that I think it is the greatest wheel, it is more that I can not afford any other. Anyway your magazine has commented a couple of times that the ergonomics are all wrong and they are NOT. True the T2 does have a gear stick... well so do all forms of motor sport except Formula 1. Indy Cars, Touring cars and any manual road car you can name have gear sticks. As for Rally cars well they continue to go sideways one handed and it doesn't seem to affect them! I should say you are all girls for not being able to do the same but I won't because that would be rude.

AS for the pedals being close together, while I do agree with you I believe all competitive race cars have their pedals close together and besides most top drivers these days left foot break so the close pedals are not a problem.

As you can see I am quite partial

to the Thrustmaster layout and think it is the best compromise. Of course, if they were able to go one better they could add gear change paddles as an option and cover all the bases couldn't they?

Garry Hutcheson
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Need for Win 95 speed

Nice mag. Anyway I share Adam Wade's views in the May issue. I share his concern about the lack of DOS games and I dislike Bill Gates as much as any frustrated Macintosh owner. I recently purchased the much anticipated NFS2. Yeh it looked good on that back of the box, and I knew it would run decently on my computer; well so I thought. It seems EA have sacrificed the game in the name of Bill Gates. NFS2 runs like a dog under Win 95 and I am hugely disappointed with the end product. To run NFS2 in high res at a smooth pace you need more than your average computer. I tried it on my friend's computer which is a P133, 32MB RAM and a 3D Blaster and it ran jerky. Win 95 robs your computer of its memory and its maximum performance, and I think that if EA were true to the customers they would have built a better game engine that ran in DOS rather than selling out to Bill Gates. Not only would this allow more people to buy the game because of its' ability to run on low spec computers, but it would increase the overall acceptance from PC gamers as a good game overall. It seems that EA think they can produce any game and it will sell. Well, I won't buy many more of their games. They should have taken a page out of Geoff Crammond's F1GP2 on how to make a good racing game. Sure, it's F1 but you can apply the basic structure to any game.

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Everything's funny

I'm writing this to encourage the amount of humour that you include in your mags each month. I have noticed that over twelve issues you have stepped up the way you classify various aspects of the computer world. I think that the humour you're including is brilliant, (I tend to get more out of the mag than the CD) although I still use the CD occasionally. Little

things like "Here's a nice Quake screenshot. No reason for it, we just liked it" in issue twelve, is what I'm talking about, it makes what you read more interesting. I do have a small prob though.

Finally, is it sheer co-incidence that the cover of your issue twelve is the same graphic as the one on the PC-Gamer mag (The MDK pic), which came out at the same time, or is there some shifty business going on between you two mag companies???

Keep up the good work anyhow :)

BEN
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We were given that artwork as a "custom job for PowerPlay". "Custom", as it turns out, does not apparently mean exclusive...

Patriot games

Oh, at last! I stopped buying games magazines about 3-4 years ago, because my Amiga was passing its use-by date and the reviews of things I couldn't play were too depressing.

Now a few years on, I'm doing a computing degree and have finally gone into debt to get myself another computer. It's a bit of a beast. :)

So I was strolling through the newsagent looking for something to get me back up to date, and I saw your magazine. You can't even hope to comprehend how happy I was a few minutes after picking it up - here was a quality magazine, with up to date reviews and a touch of style, and it was Australian!! Things have changed for the better it seems.

I noticed in my first issue complaints in the letters section about English mags - well, whether people agree with me or not, you guys have managed to recreate what for me were the reasons I would never buy anything but an English mag - you're funny, and not so bloody American.

Finally, there are advertisements for companies in this country (without any weird - my god, I don't even have one on the keyboard - you know, little English money squiggle things) and yet not too many (IMO), no fine print telling me I can't enter the competitions, and no obscure references to foreign current events.

Well, what can I say? Keep it up, and I'll be back for more.

Thanks,
John Dalton
Hobart, Tas.

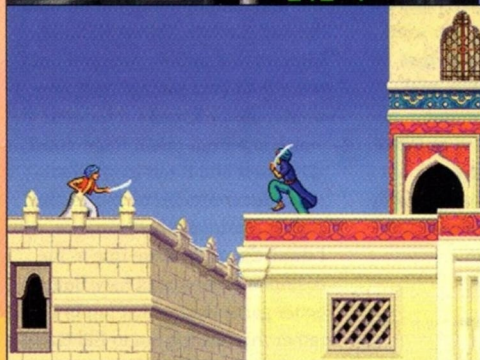


Regression session with David.

Walking into the PowerPlay office one innocuous Tuesday morning, I tripped over a mountain of competition entries, sprawled with little dignity across the room and slammed my head upon a discarded Microsoft Sidewinder joystick. As I lay unconscious, amidst the piles of useless games that no one wants to take home and other assorted junk that Ben never tidies away, my gaming life selectively and appropriately flashes before my eyes. Which was quite handy really, cos I was just about to write an article on my fave games ever. Look, it's going all swirly!

Back to 1990, and there I am playing Jordan Mechner's impossibly cool Prince Of Persia. In between jousts with skeletons across crumbling bridges and leaping death-defyingly through those clomping steel guillotines, I took time out to create huge maps of each level. I still have them, you know, these giant desk-sized pieces of graph paper covered in platform diagrams and comments like "Health potion here!"

Forward in time and - oh! - there's Ultima Underworld, the greatest RPG ever made, except for Underworld 2. Actually being able to have conversations with the various tribes of monsters that lurked



in the depths of the Underworld (forging friendships with some, making enemies of others) was only one of the many brilliant things about this game. Having the first true 3D graphics engine was another. A third was discovering a secret passage inside the goblins' toilet bowl. But please don't ask

me what on earth I was doing there in the first place.

Formula One Grand Prix wobbles past in a dreamy haze. It looks hopelessly outdated to my eyes now, and

plays somewhat less than realistically, but it remains a significant influence on my formative years. When I was doing my HSC, I somehow managed to find the time to run a full-length season at 100% race distance, edging out Ayrton Senna for the Championship. After a while it became a case of, if I could manage to keep the car on the track then I would win easily. But thanks to the "idiosyncrasies" of the computer drivers, I would frequently experience that terrible moment when it dawns that that overtaking manoeuvre was just a tad ambitious and I would soon be watching the rest of the race from the side of the track.

Next I see three very familiar faces float by in their portable toilets. Yes, it's Bernard, Laverne and Hoagie from Day Of The Tentacle. I know Sam & Max and Monkey Island have their fans (it's surprising how few people mention Sierra in the context of great adventure games), but DOTT really did it for me. It's

difficult to isolate any one particular scene or puzzle because everything was so contingent upon everything else, they all linked together perfectly. That's what made it so wonderful and, surely, still the benchmark for ingeniously contrived, surreal adventure gaming.

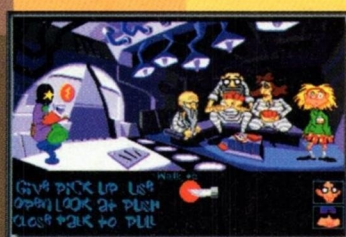
Accelerating rapidly back to the present, I spy Descent lurking furtively in a shadowy corner. Doom never captured my imagination in quite the way it obviously did to other people. I mean, I enjoyed it and all, but Descent was the 1st-person shoot 'em up that took over my life. I can still recall the immense thrill I felt when I realised that, after weeks of hair-torn frustration, I was finally able to control the damn thing properly. Soon after I was revelling in the fact that it was the most frightening game I'd ever played.

The Last Express flashes into view for a fraction of a second, before I regain consciousness. Standing up, I dust myself off, straighten my shirt, and hand this article to an oblivious Ben.

David Wildgoose

Memory lane here we come.

Top - Formula One Grand Prix, Descent and Prince of Persia
Clockwise from right - Ultima Underworld, Last Express and Day of the Tentacle.



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